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A

HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Celtic and Roman Britain	1
II.	The Coming of the English	14
III.	The Conversion of England, and the Rise of Wessex. 597-836	23
IV.	The Danish Invasions, and the Great Kings of Wessex, 836-975	33
V.	The Days of Cnut and Edward the Confessor	51
VI.	The Norman Conquest, 1066-1087	67
VII.	William the Red—Henry I.—Stephen. 1087-1154	81
VIII.	Henry II. 1154-1189	97
IX.	Richard I. and John. 1189-1216	114
X.	Henry III. 1216-1272	134
XI.	Edward I. 1272-1307	148

MAPS AND PLANS.

PAGE

THE GAELIC AND BRITISH TRIBES IN BRITAIN 3

ROMAN BRITAIN 9

ENGLAND IN THE YEAR 570 18

ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY 30

ENGLAND IN THE YEAR 900 41

FRANCE IN THE REIGN OF HENRY II. 98

THE BATTLE OF LEWES 142

THE BATTLE OF EVESHAM 145

WALES IN 1282 154

GENEALOGICAL TABLES.

THE HOUSE OF ECGBERT 66

THE HOUSE OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR 80

THE SCOTTISH SUCCESSION, 1292 161

A HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

CELTIC AND ROMAN BRITAIN.

IN the dim dawn of history our island was a land of wood and marsh, broken here and there by patches of open ground, and pierced by occasional track-ways, which threaded the forest and circled round the edges of the impassable fen. The inhabited districts of the country were not the fertile river-bottoms where population grew thick in after-days; these were in primitive times nothing but sedgy water-meadows or matted thickets. Men dwelt rather on the thinly wooded upland, where, if the soil was poor, it was at any rate free from the tangled undergrowth that covered the valleys. It was on the chalk ridges of Kent or Wilts, or the moorland hills of Yorkshire or Cornwall, rather than on the brink of the Thames or Severn, that the British tribes clustered thick. Down by the rivers there were but small settlements of hunters and fishers perched on some knoll that rose above the brake and the rushes.

The earliest explorers from the south, who described the inhabitants of Britain, seem to have noticed little difference between one wild tribe and another. But as a matter of fact the islanders were divided into two or perhaps three distinct races, who had passed westward into our island at very different dates. First had come a short dark people, who knew not the use of metals, and wielded weapons of flint and bone. They were in the lowest grade of savagery, had not even learnt to till

the soil, and lived by fishing and hunting. They dwelt in rude huts, or even in the caves from which they had driven out the bear and the wolf.

Long after these primitive settlers, the first wave of the Celts, seven or eight centuries before Christ, came flooding all over Western Europe, and drove the earlier races into nooks and corners of the earth. They crossed over into Britain after overrunning the lands on the other side of the Channel, and gradually conquered the whole island, as well as its neighbour, Erin. The Celts came in two waves; the first, composed of the people who were called Gael, seem to have appeared many generations before the second, who bore the name of Britons.

The Celts, Gael, and Britons.

The Gael are the ancestors of the people of Ireland and the Scotch Highlands, while the Britons occupied the greater part of England and Wales, and are the progenitors of the Welsh of to-day. The old savage race who held the islands before the Celts appeared, were partly exterminated and partly absorbed by the new-comers. The Celts on the eastern side of the island remained unmixed with their predecessors; but into the mountainous districts of the west they penetrated in less numbers, and there the ancient inhabitants were not slain off, but became the serfs of their conquerors. Thus the eastern shore of Britain became a purely Celtic land; but in the districts along the shore of the Irish Sea, where the Gael bore rule, the blood of the earlier race remained, and the population was largely non-Celtic. There are to this day regions where the survival of the ancient inhabitants can be traced by the preponderance of short stature and dark hair among the inhabitants. Many such are to be found both in South Wales and in the Highlands of Scotland. The Gael, therefore, were of much less pure blood than the later-coming Britons.

The Britons and their Gaelic kinsmen, though far above the degraded tribes whom they had supplanted, still showed many signs of savagery. They practised horrid rites of human sacrifice, in which they burnt captives alive to their gods, cramming them into huge images of wicker-work. But the barbarous practice which most astonished the ancient world was their custom of marking themselves with bright blue patterns painted with the dye of woad, and this led the Romans to give

the northern tribes, who retained the custom longest, the name of the *Picti*, or "painted men."

The Celts were a tall, robust, fair-haired race, who had reached a certain stage of civilization. They tilled the fields and sailed the seas, but their chief wealth consisted in great herds of cattle,



which they pastured in the forest-clearings which then constituted inhabited Britain. They wore armour of bronze, and used brazen weapons, to which in a later time they added iron weapons also. They delighted to adorn their persons with "torques" or necklaces of twisted gold. Their chiefs went out to war in chariots drawn by small shaggy horses, but alighted, like the ancient Greeks of the Heroic Age, when the hand-to-hand fighting began.

Like all Celtic tribes in all ages, the Britons and the Gael showed small capacity for union. They dwelt apart in many separate tribes, though sometimes a great and warlike chief would compel one or two of his neighbours to do him homage.

But such kingdoms usually fell to pieces at the death of the warrior who had built them up. After the kings and chiefs, the most important class among the Celts was that of the Druids, a caste of priests and soothsayers, who possessed great influence over the people. They it was who kept up the barbarous sacrifices which we have already mentioned. Although tribal wars were incessant, yet the Britons had learnt some of the arts of peace, and traded with each other and with the Celts across the Channel. For the tin of Cornwall it would seem that they made barter with the adventurous traders who pushed their way across Gaul from the distant Mediterranean to buy that metal, which was very rare in the ancient world. The Britons used money of gold and of tin, on which they stamped a barbarous copy of the devices on the coins of Philip, the great King of Macedonia, whose gold pieces found their way in the course of trade even to the shores of the Channel. The fact that they had discovered the advantages of a coinage proves sufficiently that they were no longer mere savages.

We have no materials for constructing a history of the ancient Celtic inhabitants of Britain till the middle of the first century before Christ, when the great Roman conqueror, Julius Caesar, who had just subdued northern Gaul, determined to cross the straits and invade Britain. He wished to strike terror into its inhabitants, for the tribes south of the Thames were closely connected with their kinsmen on the other side of the Channel, and he suspected them of stirring up trouble among the Gauls. Caesar took over two legions and disembarked near Romney (B.C. 55). The natives thronged down to the shore to oppose him, but his veterans plunged into the shallows, fought their way to land, and beat the Britons back into the interior. He found, however, that the land would not be an easy conquest, for all the tribes of the south turned out in arms against him. Therefore he took his legions back to Gaul as the autumn drew on, vowing to return in the next year.

Invasion of Julius Caesar.

In B.C. 54 he brought over an army twice as large as his first expedition, and boldly pushed into the interior. Cassivelaunus, the greatest chief of eastern Britain, roused a confederacy of tribes against him ; but Caesar forced the passage of the Thames, and burnt the great stockaded village in the woods beyond that river, where his enemy dwelt. Many of the neighbouring

princes then did him homage ; but troubles in Gaul called him home again, and he left the island, taking with him naught save a few hostages and a vague promise of tribute and submission from the kings of Kent.

Nearly a hundred years passed before Britain was to see another Roman army. The successors of Julius Caesar left the island to itself, and it was only by peaceful commerce with the provinces of Gaul that the Britons learnt to know of the great empire that had come to be their neighbour. But there grew up a considerable intercourse between Britain and the continent : the Roman traders came over to sell the luxuries of the South to the islanders, and British kings more than once visited Rome to implore the aid of the emperor against their domestic enemies.

Commerce with Europe.

But such aid was not granted, and the island, though perceptibly influenced by Roman civilization, was for long years not touched by the Roman sword. At last, in A.D. 43, Claudius Caesar resolved to subdue the Britons. The island was in its usual state of disorder, after the death of a great king named Cunobelinus—Shakespeare's "Cymbeline"—who had held down south-eastern Britain in comparative quiet and prosperity for many years. Some of the chiefs who fared ill in the civil wars asked Claudius to restore them, and he resolved to make their petition an excuse for conquering the island. Accordingly his general, Aulus Plautius, crossed the Channel, and overran Kent and the neighbouring districts in a few weeks. So easy was the conquest that the unwarlike emperor himself ventured over to Britain, and saw his armies cross the Thames, and occupy Camulodunum (Colchester), which had been the capital of King Cymbeline, and now was made a Roman colony, and re-named after Claudius himself.

Invasion of Claudius, A.D. 43.

The emperor returned to Rome after sixteen days spent in the island, there to build himself a memorial arch, and to celebrate a triumph in full form for the conquest of Britain. Aulus Plautius remained behind with four legions, and completed the subjection of the lands which lie between the Wash and Southampton Water, and thus formed the first Roman province in the island. There does not seem to have been very much serious fighting required to reduce the tribes of south-eastern Britain ; the conquerors

South-eastern Britain subdued.

consented to accept as their vassals those chiefs who chose to do homage, and only used their arms against such tribes as refused to acknowledge the emperor's suzerainty.

Under successive governors the size of the province of Britain continued to grow, till in the reign of Nero it had advanced up to the line of the Severn and Humber, and included all the central and southern counties of modern England. But the wild tribes of the Welsh mountains and the Yorkshire moors opposed a determined resistance to the conquerors, and did not yield till a much later date. While the governor Suetonius Paulinus was engaged in a campaign on the Menai Straits, against the tribe of the Ordovices, there burst out behind him the celebrated rebellion of Queen Boudicca (Boadicea). This rising began among the Iceni, the tribe who dwelt in what is now Norfolk and Suffolk. They had long been governed by a vassal king ; but when he died sonless, the Romans annexed his dominions and cruelly ill-treated his widow Boudicca and her daughters. Bleeding from the Roman rods, the indignant queen called her tribesmen to arms, and massacred all the Romans within her reach. All the tribes of eastern Britain rose to aid her, and the rebels cut to pieces the Ninth Legion, and sacked the three towns of Londinium, Verulamium, and Camulodunum,* slaying, it is said, as many as 70,000 persons in their wild cruelty. But presently the governor Paulinus returned from his campaign in Wales at the head of his army, and in a great battle defeated and destroyed the British hordes. Boudicca, who had led them to the field in person, slew herself when she saw the battle lost (A.D. 61).

Rebellion of Boadicea.

Southern Britain never rose again, but the Romans had great trouble in conquering the Silurians and Ordovices of Wales, and the Brigantes beyond the Humber. They were finally subdued by the great general Agricola, who governed the British province from 78 to 85. This good man was the father-in-law of the historian Tacitus, who wrote his life—a document from which great part of our knowledge of Roman Britain is derived. After conquering North-Wales and Yorkshire, Agricola marched northward against the Gaelic tribes of Scotland. He overran the Lowlands, and then pushed forward into the hills of the Highlands.

Agricola Governor of Britain, A.D. 78-85.

* London, St. Albans, Colchester.

At a spot called the Graupian Mountain (*Mons Graupius*) somewhere in Perthshire, he defeated the Caledonians, the fierce race who dwelt beyond the Forth and Clyde, with great slaughter. It was his purpose to conquer the whole island to its northernmost cape, and even to subdue the neighbouring Gaels of Ireland. But ere his task was complete the cruel and suspicious emperor Domitian called him home, because he envied and feared his military talents.

The province of Britain remained very much as Agricola had left it, stopping short at the Forth, and leaving the Scottish Highlands outside the Roman pale. It was held down by three Roman legions, each of whom watched one of the three most unruly of the British tribes; one at Eboracum (York) curbed the Brigantes; a second at Deva (Chester) observed the Ordovices; and a third at Isca (Caerleon-on-Usk) was responsible for the good behaviour of the Silurians.

Agricola did much to make the Roman rule more palatable to the Britons by his wise ordinances for the government of the province. He tried to persuade the Celtic chiefs to learn Latin, and to take to civilized ways of life, as their kinsmen in Gaul had done. He kept the land so safe and well guarded that thousands of settlers from the continent came to dwell in its towns. His efforts won much success, and for the future, southern Britain was a very quiet province.

The Wall of Hadrian.

But the Caledonians to the north retained their independence, and often raided ~~into~~ the Lowlands, while the Brigantes of Yorkshire still kept rising in rebellion, and once in the reign of Hadrian massacred the whole legion that garrisoned York. It was perhaps this disaster that drew Hadrian himself to Britain in the course of his never-ending travels. The emperor journeyed across the isle, and resolved to fix the Roman boundary on a line traced across the Northumbrian moors from Carlisle to Newcastle. There was erected the celebrated "Wall of Hadrian," a solid stone wall drawn in front of the boundary-ditch that marked the old frontier, and furnished with forts at convenient intervals. This enormous work, eighty miles long, reached from sea to sea, and was garrisoned by a number of "auxiliary cohorts," or regiments drawn from the subject tribes of the empire—Moors, Spaniards, Thracians, and many more—for the Romans did not trust

British troops to hold the frontier against their own untamed kinsmen. The legion at York remained behind to support the garrison of the wall in case of necessity.

The Wall of Antoninus.

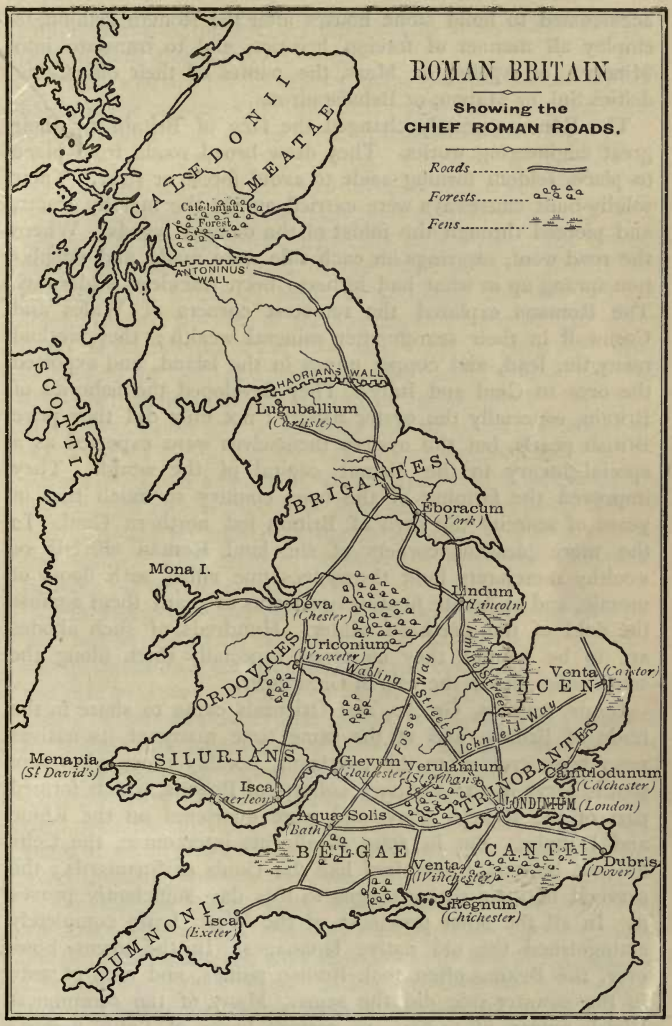
A few years later the continued trouble which the northern parts of Britain suffered from the raids of the Caledonians, caused the governors of the province to build another wall in advance of that of Hadrian. This outer line of defence, a less solid work than that which ran from Newcastle to Carlisle, was composed of a trench, and an earthern wall of sods, drawn from the mouth of the Forth to the mouth of the Clyde, at the narrowest part of the island. It is generally called the Wall of Antoninus, from the name of the emperor who was reigning when it was erected.

Campaign of Severus in Caledonia.

Only once more did the Romans make any endeavour to complete the subjection of Britain by adding the Gaelic tribes of the Scottish Highlands to the list of their tributaries. In 208–9–10 the warlike emperor Severus led the legions north of the Wall of Antoninus, and set to work to tame the Caledonians by felling their forests, building roads across their hills, and erecting forts among them. He overran the land beyond the Firth of Forth, and might perchance have ended by conquering the whole island, but he died of disease at York early in 211. His successors drew back, abandoned his conquests, and never attempted again to subjugate the Caledonians.

Roman civilization in Britain.

Altogether the Romans abode in Britain for three hundred and sixty years (A.D. 43 to A.D. 410). Their occupation of the land was mainly a military one, and they never succeeded in teaching the mass of the natives to abandon their Celtic tongue, or to take up Roman customs and habits. The towns indeed were Romanized, and great military centres like Eboracum and Deva, or commercial centres like London, were filled with a Latin-speaking population, and boasted of fine temples, baths, and public buildings. But the villagers of the open country, and the Celtic landholders who dwelt among them, were very little influenced by the civilization of the town-dwellers, and lived on by themselves much in the way of their ancestors, worshipping the same Celtic gods, using the same rude tools and vessels, and dwelling in the same low clay huts, though the townsmen were


ROMAN BRITAIN
Showing the
CHIEF ROMAN ROADS.
Roads
Forests
Fens
CALEDONII
MEATAE
DECANTAE
Caledonian Forest
ANTONINUS WALL
HADRIAN'S WALL
SCOTTI
Luguballium (Carlisle)
BRIGANTES
Eboracum (York)
Mona I.
Deva (Chester)
Lindum (Lincoln)
Uriconium (Wroxeter)
ORDOVICES
Watling Street
Fosse Way
Ermine Street
Icknield Way
Venta (Caistor)
ICENI
Menapia (St. David's)
SILURIANS
Isca (Caerleon)
Glevum (Gloucester)
Verulamium (St. Albans)
TRINOBANTES
Camulodunum (Colchester)
LONDINIUM (London)
Aquæ Solis (Bath)
BELGAE
CANTII
Venta (Winchester)
Dubris (Dover)
Regnum (Chichester)
Isca (Exeter)
DUMNONII

accustomed to build stone houses after the Roman fashion, to employ all manner of foreign luxuries, and to translate into Minerva, or Apollo, or Mars, the names of their old Celtic deities Sul, or Mabon, or Belucatadrus.

The Romans greatly changed the face of Britain by their great engineering works. They drew broad roads from place to place, seldom turning aside to avoid forest or river. Their solidly-built causeways were carried across the marshy tracts, and pierced through the midst of the densest woods. Where the road went, clearings on each side were made, and population sprang up in what had hitherto been trackless wilderness. The Romans explored the remotest corners of Wales and Cornwall in their search after mineral wealth; they worked many tin, lead, and copper mines in the island, and exported the ores to Gaul and Italy. They developed the fisheries of Britain, especially the oyster fishery; not only did they prize British pearls, but the oysters themselves were exported as a special luxury to the distant capital of the world. They improved the farming of the open country so much that in years of scarcity the corn of Britain fed northern Gaul. In the more pleasant corners of the land Roman officials or wealthy merchants built themselves fine villas, with floors of mosaic, and elaborate heating-apparatus to guard them against the cold of the northern winter. Hundreds of such abodes are to be found: they clustered especially thick along the south coast and in the vale of Gloucester.

Gauls, Italians, Greeks, and Orientals came to share in the trade of Britain, and at the same time many of its natives must have crossed to the continent, notably those who were sent to serve in the auxiliary cohorts of Britons, which formed part of the Roman army, and were quartered on the Rhine and Danube. But in spite of all this intercourse, the Celts did not become Romanized like the Gauls or Spaniards; the survival of their native tongue to this day sufficiently proves it. In all the other provinces of the West, Latin completely extinguished the old native languages. In the towns, however, the Britons often took Roman names, and men of note in the country-side did the same. Many of the commonest Welsh names of to-day are corrupt forms of Latin names: Owen, for example, is a degradation from Eugenius, and Rhys

from Ambrosius, though they have lost so entirely the shape of their ancient originals.

Britain shared with the other provinces in the disasters which fell upon the empire in the third century, in the days of the weak usurpers who held the imperial throne after the extinction of the family of Severus. Three races are recorded as having troubled the land: the first was the ancient enemy, the Caledonians from beyond the wall, whom now the Chronicles generally style *Picts*, "the painted men," because they alone of the inhabitants of Britain still retained the barbarous habit of tattooing themselves. The second foe was the race of the Saxons, the German tribes who dwelt by the mouths of the Elbe and Weser. They were great marauders by sea, and so vexed the east of Britain by their descents that the emperors created an officer called "The Count of the Saxon Shore," * whose duty was to guard the coast from the Wash as far as Beachy Head by a chain of castles on the water's edge, and a flotilla of war-galleys. The third enemy was the Scottish race, a tribe who then occupied northern Ireland, and had not yet moved across to the land which now bears their name. They infested the shores of the province which lay between the Clyde and the Severn.

Britain harassed by barbarians.

Attacked at once by Pict and Scot and Saxon, the province declined in prosperity, and gained little help from the continent where emperors were being made and remade at the rate of about one every three years. Britain seems to have first recovered herself in the time of Carausius, a "Count of the Saxon Shore," who proclaimed himself emperor, and reigned as an independent sovereign on our side of the Channel (287). His fleet drove off the Saxons, and his armies held back the Pict and Scot as long as he lived. But after a reign of seven years the rebel emperor was murdered, and three years later the province was reunited to the empire.

Carausius.

For the next twenty years Britain was under the rule of the emperors Constantius and Constantine, both of whom dwelt much in the island, and paid attention to its needs. Constantius died at York, and his son, Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, went forth from Britain to conquer all the Roman world. But with

Constantius and Constantine.

* Comes Littoris Saxonici.

the extinction of this great man's family in 362, evil days began once more. Barbarians were thronging round every frontier of the empire, greedy for the plunder of its great cities, while within were weak rulers, vexed by constant military rebellions. The Pict, the Scot, and the Saxon returned to Britain in greater force than before, and pushed their raids into the very heart of the province. Meanwhile, the soldiery who should have defended the island were constantly being drawn away by ambitious generals, who wished to use them in attempts to seize Italy, and win the imperial diadem. The ruin of Britain must be attributed to this cause more than to any other: twice the whole of its garrison was taken across the Channel by the rebellious governors, who had staked their all on the cast for empire. It was after the second of these rebels had failed, in 410, that the feeble Honorius, the legitimate emperor of the West, refused to send back any troops to guard the unprotected island, and bade the dismayed provincials do their best to defend themselves, because he was unable to give them any assistance.

Britain deserted by the Romans.

Britain therefore ceased to belong to the Roman empire, not because it wished to throw off the yoke, but because its masters declared that they could no longer protect it. Its inhabitants were by no means anxious to shift for themselves, and more than once they sent pathetic appeals to Rome to ask for aid against the savage Picts and Saxons. One of these appeals was written more than thirty years after Honorius abandoned the province. It was called "The Groans of the Britons," and ran thus: "The barbarians drive us into the sea, the sea drives us back on to the barbarians. Our only choice is whether we shall die by the sword or drown: for we have none to save us" (446).

In spite of these doleful complaints, Britain made a better fight against her invaders than did any other of the provinces which the Romans were constrained to abandon in the fifth century. But, unfortunately for themselves, the Britons were inspired by the usual Celtic spirit of disunion, and fell asunder into many states the moment that the hand of the master was removed. Sometimes they combined under a single leader, when the stress of invasion was unusually severe, but such leagues were precarious and temporary. The list of their

princes shows that some of them were Romanized Britons, others pure Celts. By the side of names like Ambrosius, Constantine, Aurelius, Gerontius, Paternus, we have others like Vortigern, Cunedda, Maelgwn, and Kynan. Arthur, the legendary chief under whom the Britons are said to have turned back the Saxon invaders for a time, was—if he ever existed—the bearer of a Roman name, a corruption of Artorius. But Arthur's name and exploits are only found in romantic tales ; the few historians of the time have no mention of him.

Celtic Britain, when the Romans abandoned it, had become a Christian country. Of the details of conversion of the land, we have only a few stories of doubtful authenticity ; but we know that British bishops existed, and attended synods and councils on the continent, and that there were many churches scattered over the face of the land. The Britons were even beginning to send missionaries across the sea in the fifth century. St. Patrick, the apostle of the Irish Gael, was a native of the northern part of Roman Britain, who had been stolen as a slave by Scottish pirates, and returned after his release to preach the gospel to them, somewhere about the year 440. His name (Patricius) clearly shows that he was a Romanized Briton. A less happy product of the island was the heretical preacher Pelagius, whose doctrines spread far over all Western Europe, and roused the anger of the great African saint, Augustine of Hippo.

Christianity in Britain.

Here we must leave Celtic Britain, as the darkness of the fifth century closes over it. For a hundred and fifty years our knowledge of its history is most vague and fragmentary, and when next we see the island clearly, the larger half of it has passed into the hands of a new people, and is called England, and no longer Britain.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMING OF THE ENGLISH.

In the early half of the fifth century it seemed likely that Britain would become the prey of its old enemies the Picts and Scots, rather than of the more distant Saxons. But the wild tribes of the North came to plunder only, while the pirates from the Elbe and Eider had larger designs.

The conquest of Britain by the Angles and Saxons differed in every way from that of the other Western provinces of the Roman empire by the kindred tribes of the Goths, the Franks, and the Lombards. The Goths and the Franks had dwelt for two hundred years on the borders of the empire ; they had traded with its merchants, served as mercenaries in its armies, and learnt to appreciate its luxuries. Many of them had accepted Christianity long before their conquest of the provinces which they turned into Teutonic kingdoms. But the Saxons were plunged in the blackest heathendom and barbarism, dwelling as they did by the Elbe and Eider, far at the back of the tribes that had any touch with or knowledge of the empire and its civilization. The Goth and the Frank came to enslave, and to enjoy ; the Angle and the Saxon were bent purely on a work of destruction. Hence it came that, instead of contenting themselves with overthrowing the provincial government, and enthralling the inhabitants of the land, they swept away everything before them, and replaced the old civilization of Britain by a perfectly new social organization of their own.

Hengist and Horsa, 449.— Kingdom of Kent.

If the Welsh legends speak truly, the first settlement of the Saxons on British soil was caused by the unwisdom of the native kings. We are told that Vortigern, the monarch who ruled Kent and south-eastern Britain, was so harried by the Picts and Scots that he sent in despair to hire some German chiefs to fight his battles for him. The story may be true, for in the decaying days of the Roman empire the

Caesars themselves had often hired one barbarian to fight another, and the British king may well have followed their example. The legend then proceeds to tell how Vortigern's invitation was accepted by Hengist and Horsa, two chiefs of Jutish blood, who came with their war-bands to the aid of the Britons, and drove away the Picts and Scots. But when the king of Kent wished to pay them their due and get them out of the country, Hengist and Horsa refused to depart: they seized and fortified the Isle of Thanet, which was then separated from the mainland by a broad marshy channel, and defied the Britons to drive them away (449). Then began a long war between the two sea-kings and their late employer, which, after many vicissitudes, ended in the conquest of the whole of Kent by Hengist. Horsa had been slain in the battle of Aylesford, which gave the invaders full possession of the land between the forest of the Weald and the estuary of the Thames. Hengist was saluted as king by his victorious followers, and was the ancestor of a long line of Kentish monarchs.

We cannot be sure that the details of the story of the conquest of Kent are correct, but they are not unlikely, and it is quite probable that this kingdom was the first state which the Germans built up on British ground.

Hengist and Horsa's warriors were not Saxons, but members of the tribe of the Jutes, who dwelt north of the Saxons in the Danish peninsula, where a land of moors and lakes still bears the name of Jutland. But the next band of invaders who seized on part of Britain were of Saxon blood. An "alderman" or chief called Aella brought his war-band to the southern shore of Britain in 477, and landed near the great fortress of Anderida (Pevensey), one of the strongholds that had, in old days, been under the care of the Roman "count of the Saxon shore." The followers of Aella sacked this town, and slew off every living thing that was therein. They went on to conquer the narrow slip of land between the sea and the forest of the Weald, as far as Chichester and Selsea, and made the chalky downs their own. Settling down thereon, they called themselves the South Saxons, and the district got from them the name of Sussex (Suth Seaxe). There Aella reigned as king, and many of his obscure descendants after him.

Aella, 477.—Kingdom of the South Saxons.

Twenty years later, another band of Saxon adventurers, led by the alderman Cerdic, landed on Southampton Water, west of the realm of Aella (495), and, after a hard fight with the Britons, won the valleys of the Itchen and the Test with the old Roman town of Venta (Winchester). Many years after his first landing, Cerdic took the title of king, like his neighbours of Kent and Sussex, and his realm became known as the land of the West Saxons (Wessex). Gradually pushing onward along the ridges of the downs, successive generations of the kings of Wessex drove the Britons out of Dorsetshire and Wiltshire till the line of conquest stopped at the forest-belt which lay east of Bath. Here the advance stood still for a time, for the British kings of the Damnonians, the tribes of Devon and Cornwall, made a most obstinate defence. So gallant was it that the Celts of a later generation believed that the legendary hero of their race, the great King Arthur, had headed the hosts of Damnonia in person, and placed his city of Camelot and his grave at Avilion within the compass of the western realm.

Cerdic, 495.— Kingdom of the West Saxons.

While Cerdic was winning the downs of Hampshire for himself, another band of Saxon warriors had landed on the northern shore of the Thames, and subdued the low-lying country between the old Roman towns of Camulodunum and Londinium, from the Colne as far as the Stour. This troop of adventurers took the name of the East Saxons, and were the last of their race to gain a footing on the British shores.

Kingdom of the East Saxons.

North of Essex it was no longer the Saxons who took up the task of conquest, but a kindred tribe, the Angles or English, who dwelt originally between the Saxons and the Jutes, in the district which is now called Schleswig. They were closely allied in blood and language to the earlier invaders of Britain, and very probably their chiefs may have aided in the earlier raids. About the year 520 the Angles descended in force on the eastern shore of Britain, and two of their war-bands established themselves in the land where the Celtic tribe of the Iceni had dwelt. These two bands called themselves the North Folk and South Folk, and from them the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk get

Kingdom of East Anglia, 520.

their names. The kingdom formed by their union was known as that of the East Angles.

Still further to the north new Anglian bands seized on the lands north of the Humber, whence they obtained the name of Northumbrians. They built up two kingdoms in the old region of the Brigantes. One, from Forth to Tees, was called Bernicia, from Bryneich, the old Celtic name of the district. It comprised only a strip along the shore, reaching no further inland than the forest of Selkirk and the head-waters of the Tyne; its central stronghold was the sea-girt rock of Bamborough. The second Northumbrian kingdom was called Deira, a name derived, like that of Bernicia, from the former Celtic appellation of the land. Deira comprised the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, and centred round the old Roman city of Eboracum, whose name the Angles corrupted into Eofervic. The origin of Bernicia and Deira is ascribed to the years 547–550, so that northern Britain was not subdued by the invaders till a century after Kent had fallen into their hands.

The Northumbrian kingdoms, 547-550.

Last of the English realms was established the great midland state of Mercia—the "March" or borderland. It was formed by the combination of three or four Anglian war-bands, who must have cut their way into the heart of Britain up the line of the Trent. Among these bodies of adventurers were the Lindiswaras—the troop who had won the old Roman city of Lindum, or Lincoln,—the Mid-Angles of Leicester, and the Mercians strictly so-called, who held the foremost line of advance against the Celts in the modern counties of Derby and Stafford. The Britons still maintained themselves at Deva and Uriconium (Chester and Wroxeter), two ancient Roman strongholds, and the Mercians had not yet reached the Severn at any point.

The kingdom of Mercia.

About 570, therefore, after a hundred and twenty years of hard fighting, the Angles and Saxons had conquered about one-half of Britain, but they were stopped by a line of hills and forests running down the centre of the island, and did not yet touch the western sea at any point. Behind this barrier dwelt the unsubdued Britons, who were styled by the English the "Welsh," or "foreigners," though they called themselves the Kymry, or "comrades." They were, now

The Britons in the west.

as always, divided into several kingdoms whose chiefs were perpetually at war, and failed most lamentably to support each other against the English invader. The most important of these kingdoms were Cumbria in the north, between the Clyde and



Ribble, Gwynedd in North Wales, and Damnonia in Devon and Cornwall. Now and again prominent chiefs from one or other of these three realms succeeded in forcing their neighbours to combine against the Saxon enemy, and styled themselves lords of all the Britons, but the title was precarious and illusory. The Celts could never learn union or wisdom.

The line of the British defence was at last broken in two points, and the Saxons and Angles pushed through till they touched the Irish Sea and the Bristol Channel.

Battle of Deorham, 577.

The first of the conquerors of Western Britain was Ceawlin, king of Wessex. After winning the southern midlands by a victory at Bedford in 571 he pushed along the upper Thames, and attacked the Welsh of the lower Severn. At a great battle fought at Deorham, in Gloucestershire, in 577, he slew the kings of Glevum, Corinium, and Aquae Sulis (Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath). All their realms fell into his hands,

and so the West Saxons won their way to the Severn and the Bristol Channel, and cut off the Celts of Damnonia from the Celts of South Wales.

A generation later, in the year 613, Aethelfrith the Northumbrian, king of Bernicia and Deira, made a similar advance westward. In a great battle at Deva (Chester) he defeated the allied princes of Cumbria and North Wales. This fight was long remembered because of the massacre of a host of monks who had come to supplicate Heaven for the victory of the Celts over the pagan English. "If they do not fight against us with their arms, they do so with their prayers," said the Northumbrian king, and bade his warriors cut them all down. The city of Deva was sacked, and remained a mere ring of mouldering Roman walls for three centuries. The district round it became English, and thus the Cumbrians were separated from the North Welsh by a belt of hostile territory.

Battle of Chester, 613.

The battles of Chester and Deorham settled the future of Britain; the Celts became comparatively helpless when they had been cut into three distinct sections, in Cumbria, Wales, and Damnonia. The future of the island now lay in the hands of the English, not in that of the ancient inhabitants of Britain.

The states which the invaders had built up were, as might have been inferred from their origin, small military monarchies. The basis of each had been the war-band that followed some successful "alderman," for the invaders were not composed of whole tribes emigrating *en masse*, but of the more adventurous members of the race only. The bulk of the Saxons and Jutes remained behind on the continent in their ancient homes, and so did many of the Angles. When the successful chief had conquered a district of Britain and assumed the title of king, he would portion the land out among his followers, reserving a great share for his own royal demesne. Each of the king's sworn companions, or *gesiths* as the old English called them, became the centre of a small community of dependents—his children, servants, and slaves. At first the invaders often slew off the whole Celtic population of a valley, but ere long they found the convenience of reducing them to slavery and forcing them to till the land for their new masters. In eastern Britain and during the first days of the conquest the natives were often wholly extirpated, but in the

The invaders and the natives.

central and still more in the western part of the island they were allowed to survive as serfs, and thus there is much Celtic blood in England down to this day. But this native element was never strong enough to prevail over and absorb the conquerors, as happened to the Goths of Spain and the Franks of Gaul, who finally lost their language and their national identity among the preponderant mass of their own dependents.

As the conquest of Britain went on, many families who had not been in the war-band of the original invader came in to join the first settlers, and to dwell among them, so that the king had many English subjects besides his original *gesiths*. Some of the villages in his dominions would therefore be inhabited by the servile dependents of one of these early-coming military chiefs, others by the free bands of kinsmen who had drifted in of their own accord to settle in the land. When we see an English village with a name like Saxmundham, or Edmonton, or Wolverton, we may guess that the place was originally the homestead of a lord named Saxmund, or Eadmund, or Wulfhere, and his dependents. But when it has a name like Buckingham, or Paddington, or Gillingham, we know that it was the common settlement of a family, the Buckings or the Paddings or the Gillings, for the termination *-ing* in old English invariably implied a body of descendants from common ancestors.

Administration—Aldermen and shire-reeves.

The early English states were administered under the king by aldermen, or military chiefs, to each of whom was entrusted the government of one of the various regions of the kingdom, and by *reeves*, who were responsible for the royal property and dues, each in his own district. The larger kingdoms, such as Wessex, were soon cut up into *shires*, each with its alderman and shire-reeve (sheriff), and many of these shires exist down to our own day.

The king and the witan.

The supreme council of the realm was formed by the king, the aldermen, and a certain number of the greater *gesiths* who served about the king's person. The king and great men discussed subjects of national moment, while the people sat round and shouted assent or dissent to their speeches. The king did not take any measure of importance without the advice of his councillors, who were known as the *Witan*, or Wise-men. When a king died, or ruled tyrannically, or became incompetent, it was the Witan who chose a new

monarch from among the members of the royal family, for there was as yet no definite rule of hereditary succession, and the kingship was elective, though the Witan never went outside the limits of the royal house in their nominations.

The smaller matters of import in an old English kingdom were settled at the *shire-moot*, or meeting of all the freemen of a shire. There, once a month, the aldermen and reeve of the district called up the freeholders who dwelt in it, and by their aid settled disputes and law-suits. Each freeman had his vote, so the shire-court was a much more democratic body than the Witan, where only great lords and officials could speak and give their suffrages.

The shire-moot and tun-moot.

Matters too small for the *shire-moot* were settled by the meeting of the villagers in their own petty *tun-moot*, which every freeman would attend. Here would be decided disputes between neighbours, as to their fields and cattle. Such cases would be numerous because, in the early settlements of the English, the ploughed fields and the pasture grounds of the village were both great unenclosed tracts with no permanent boundaries. Every man owned his house and yard, but the pasture and the waste land and woods around belonged to the community, and not to the individual.

The early English were essentially dwellers in the open country. They did not at first know how to deal with the old Roman towns, but simply plundered and burnt them, and allowed them to crumble away. They thought the deserted ruins were the homes of ghosts and evil spirits, and were not easily induced to settle near them. Even great towns like Canterbury and London and Bath seem to have lain waste for a space, between their destruction by the first invaders and their being again peopled. But ere long the advantages of the sites, and the abundance of building material which the old Roman buildings supplied, tempted the English back to the earlier centres of population. We can trace the ancient origin of many of our towns by their names: the English added the word -chester or -caster to the name of the places which were built on Roman sites —a word derived, of course, from the Latin *castra*. So Winchester and Rochester and Dorchester and Lancaster are shown to be old Roman towns rebuilt, but not founded by the new-comers.

Gradual growth of towns.

Religion.

In religion the old English were pure polytheists, worshipping the ancient gods of their German ancestors, Woden, the wise father of heaven, and Thunder (Thor), the god of storm and strength, and Balder, the god of youth and spring, and many more. But they were not an especially religious people; they had few temples and priests, and did not allow their superstition to influence their life or their politics to any great extent. We shall see that in a later age most of them deserted their pagan worship without much regret and after but a short struggle. It was more a matter of ancestral custom to them than a very fervent belief. It is noticeable that very few places in England get their names from the old gods; but we find a few, such as Wednesbury (Woden's-burh) or Thundersfield, or Balderston, scattered over the face of the country.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONVERSION OF BRITAIN AND THE RISE OF WESSEX.

597–836.

AFTER the battles of Deorham and Chester had broken the strength of the Britons, and all central Britain had fallen into English hands, the victorious invaders did not persevere in completing the conquest of the island, but turned to contend with each other. For the next two hundred years the history of England is the history of the conflict of the three larger kingdoms—Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex—for the supremacy and primacy in the island. First one, then the other obtained a mastery over its rivals, but the authority of an English king who claimed to be "Bretwalda," or paramount lord of Britain, was as vague and precarious as that of the Celtic chiefs who in an earlier age had asserted a similar domination over their tribal neighbours.

Both Ceawlin the victor of Deorham, and Aethelfrith the victor of Chester, were great conquerors in their own day, and are said to have claimed an over-lordship over their neighbours. But about the year 595, when the one was dead and the other had not yet risen, the chief king of Britain was Aethelbert of Kent, a warlike young monarch who subdued his neighbours of Sussex and Essex, and aspired to extend his influence all over the island.

To the court of this King Aethelbert there came, in the year 597, an embassy from beyond the high seas, which was destined to change the whole course of the history of England. It was led by the monk Augustine, and was composed of a small band of missionaries from Rome, who had set out in the hope of converting the English

Augustine, 597 —Conversion of Kent.

to Christianity. Twenty years before there had been a pious abbot in Rome named Gregory, who had earnestly desired to go forth to preach the gospel to the English. The well-known legend tells how he once saw exposed in the market for sale some young boys of a fair countenance. "Who are these children?" he asked of the slave-dealer. "Heathen Angles," was the reply. "Truly they have the faces of angels," said Gregory. "And whence have they been brought?" "From the kingdom of Deira," he was told. "Indeed, they should be brought *de ira Dei*, out from the land of the wrath of God," was the abbot's punning rejoinder. From that day Gregory strove to set forth for Britain, but circumstances always stood in his way. At last he became pope, and when he had gained this position of authority, he determined that he would send others, if he could not go himself, to care for the souls of the pagan English.

So in 596 he sent out the zealous monk Augustine, with a company of priests and others, to seek out the land of England. Augustine landed in Kent, both because King Aethelbert was the greatest chief in Britain, and because he had taken as his queen a Christian lady from Gaul, Bertha, the daughter of Charibert, king of Paris. So Augustine and his fellows came to Canterbury to the court of the king, and when Aethelbert saw them he asked his wife what manner of men they might be. When she had pleaded for them, he looked upon them kindly, and gave them the ruined Roman church of St. Martin outside the gates of Canterbury, and told them that they might preach freely to all his subjects. So Augustine dwelt in Kent, and taught the Kentishmen the truths of Christianity till many of them accepted the gospel and were baptized. Ere long King Aethelbert himself was converted, and when he had declared himself a Christian most of his *gesiths* and nobles followed him to the font. Then Augustine was made Archbishop of Canterbury, and his companion Mellitus Bishop of Rochester, and the kingdom of Kent became a part of Christendom once more.

Ere very long the kings of the East Saxons and East Angles, who were vassals to Aethelbert, declared that they also were ready to accept the gospel. They were baptized with many of their subjects, but Christianity was not yet very firmly rooted among them. When King Aethelbert died, and was succeeded

by his son, who was a heathen and an evil liver, a great portion of the men who so easily accepted Christianity fell back into paganism again. They had conformed to please the king, not because they had appreciated the truths of the gospel. East Anglia and Essex relapsed almost wholly from the faith, and had to be reconverted a generation later; but in Kent Augustine's work had been more thorough, and after a short struggle the whole kingdom finally became Christian.

From Kent the true faith was conveyed to the English of the North. Eadwine, King of Northumbria, married a daughter of Aethelbert and Bertha. She was a Christian, and brought with her to York a Roman chaplain named Paulinus, one of the disciples of Augustine. By the exhortations of this Paulinus, King Eadwine was led toward Christianity. He was a great warrior, and while he was doubting as to the faith, it chanced that he had to set forth on an expedition against his enemy, the King of Wessex. Then he vowed that if the God of the Christians gave him victory and he should return in peace, he would be baptized. The campaign was successful, and Eadwine went joyfully to the baptismal font. It was long remembered how he held council with his Witan, urging them to leave darkness for light, and doubt for certainty. Then, because they had found little help in their ancient gods, and because the heathen faith gave them no good guidance for this life, and no good hope of a better life to come, the great men of Northumbria swore that they would follow their king. Coifi, the high priest, was the first to cast down his own idols and destroy the great temple of York, and with him the nobles and *gesiths* of Eadwine went down to the water and were all baptized (627).

Conversion and prosperity of Eadwine of Northumbria.

For some time King Eadwine prospered greatly; he became the chief king of Britain, and made the East Angles and East Saxons his vassals. He destroyed the Welsh kingdom of Leeds, and added the West Riding of Yorkshire to the Northumbrian kingdom. He also smote the Picts beyond the Forth, and built a fleet on the Irish sea with which he reduced the isles of Man and Anglesea.

Eadwine's conquests roused all his neighbours against him, and in their common fear of the Northumbrian sword, English and Welsh princes were for the first time found joining in

alliance. Penda, King of Mercia, an obstinate heathen and a great foe of the gospel, leagued himself with Cadwallon, King of Gwynedd, the greatest of the Christian chiefs of Wales. Together they beset the realm of Eadwine, and the great King of Northumbria fell in battle with all his host, at Heathfield, near Doncaster (632).

Defeat and death of Eadwine.—Reaction against Christianity.

The Welsh and Mercians overran Northumbria after slaying its king, and Cadwallon took York and burnt it. The Northumbrians thought that Eadwine's God had been found wanting in the day of battle, and most of them relapsed into paganism in their despair. Paulinus, who had become the first Bishop of York, had to flee away into Kent, the only kingdom where Christians were safe for the moment.

But ere very long the Northumbrians were saved from their despair. Eadwine and the ancient stock of the kings of Deira were swept away, but there were two princes alive of the royal house of Bernicia. Their names were Oswald and Oswiu, and during Eadwine's reign they had been living in exile. Their abode had been among those of the Scots who had crossed over from Ireland and settled on the coast of northern Britain, in the land which now bears their name. There the two brethren had fallen in with the disciples of the good Abbot Columba, the founder of the great monastery of Iona, and from them they had learnt the Christian faith. Columba, whose successors were to convert all the north of England, had been a man of great mark. He was an Irish monk who had left his own land in self-imposed exile, because he had been the cause of a tribal war among his countrymen. Crossing to the Argyleshire coast, he built a monastery on the lonely island of Iona, and from thence laboured for the conversion of the Picts and Scots.

The Irish missionaries.—Columba.

When Oswald heard of the desperate condition of Northumbria after Eadwine's death, he resolved to go to the aid of his countrymen against the Welsh and Mercians. So he went southward with a few companions, and raised the Bernicians against their oppressors, setting up as his standard the cross that he had learnt to reverence in Iona. His effort was crowned with success, and at the Heavenfield, near the Roman wall, he completely defeated

Oswald, King of Northumbria.—Christianity restored.

the Welsh and slew their king Cadwallon. Penda the Mercian was driven out of Northumbria also, and for eight years (634–642) Oswald maintained himself as king of all the land between Forth and Trent. He used his power most zealously for the propagation of Christianity. He sent to Iona for two pious monks, Aidan and Finan, who were successively bishops of York under him, and by their aid he so drew his people toward the faith of Christ that they never swerved from it again, as they had done after the death of Eadwine. Oswald also encouraged missionaries to go into the other English kingdoms. It was by his advice that Birinus went from Rome to Wessex, where he converted King Cynegils, and founded the bishopric of Dorchester-on-Thames.

Penda, King of Mercia.—Battle of Maserfield, 642.

But Oswald was not strong enough to put down his heathen neighbour, Penda, the King of Mercia, a mighty warrior who united all the English of central Britain under his sceptre, slaying the kings of the East Angles, and tearing away Gloucester and all the land of the Hwiccas * from the kings of Wessex. Penda and Oswald were constantly at war, and at last the Mercian slew the Northumbrian at the battle of Maserfield, in Shropshire, near Oswestry (642).

Oswiu, King of Northumbria.—Conversion of Mercia.

But the good King Oswald left a worthy successor in his brother Oswiu, as zealous a Christian and as vigorous a ruler as himself. Oswiu defeated Penda at the battle of the Winweed, and by slaying the slayer became the over-king of all England. He conquered the Picts between Forth and Tay, made the Welsh and the Cumbrians pay him tribute, and annexed northern Mercia, giving the rest of the kingdom over to Peada, Penda's son, only when he became a Christian. It was all over with the cause of heathenism when Penda fell, and the Mercians and their king bowed to the conquering faith, and listened to the preaching of Ceadda, one of the Northumbrian monks who had been taught by the Irish missionaries Aidan and Finan.

Mercia and Northumbria, therefore, owed their conversion to the disciples of Columba, and looked to the monastery of Iona as the source of their Christianity, while Kent and Wessex looked

* The Hwiccas held the lands conquered by Ceawlin on the lower Severn, the modern counties of Worcester and Gloucester.

to Rome, from whence had come Augustine and Birinus. Unhappily there arose dissension between the clergy of the two churches, for the converts of the Irish monks thought that the South English paid too much deference to Rome, and differed from them on many small points of practice, such as the proper day for keeping Easter, and the way in which priests should cut their hair. King Oswiu was grievously vexed at these quarrels, and held a council at Whitby, or Streonshalch as it was then called, to hear both sides state their case before him. He made his decision in favour of the Roman observance, and many of the Irish clergy withdrew in consequence from his kingdom, rather than conform to the ways of their Roman brethren. This submission of the English to the Papal see was destined to lead to many evils in later generations, but at the time it was far the better alternative. If they had decided to adhere to the Irish connection, they would have stood aside from the rest of Western Christendom, and sundered themselves from the fellowship of Christian nations, and the civilizing influences of which Rome was then the centre (664).

Dissensions of Irish and Roman clergy.—Council at Whitby, 664.

The English Church, being thus united in communion with Rome, received as Archbishop of Canterbury a Greek monk named Theodore of Tarsus, whom Pope Vitalian recommended to them. It was this Theodore who first organized the Church of England into a united whole; down to his day the missionaries who worked in the different kingdoms had nothing to do with each other. But now all England was divided into bishoprics, which all paid obedience to the metropolitan see of Canterbury; and in each bishopric the country-side was furnished with clergy to work under the bishop. Some have said that Theodore cut up England into parishes, each served by a resident priest, but things had not advanced quite so far by his day. Under Theodore and his successors the bishops and clergy of all the kingdoms frequently met in councils and synods, so that England was united into a spiritual whole long before she gained political unity. It was first in these church meetings that Mercian, West Saxon, and Northumbrian learnt to meet as friends and equals, to work for the common good of them all.

Archbishop Theodore.—Unification of the Church in Britain.

The English Church was vigorous from the very first. Ere it had been a hundred years in existence it had begun to produce men of such wisdom and piety, that England was considered the most saintly land of Western Christendom. It sent out the missionaries who rescued Germany from heathenism—Willibrord, the apostle of Frisia; Suidbert, who converted Hesse; above all the great Winfrith (or Boniface), the first Archbishop of Mainz. This great man, the friend and adviser of the Frankish ruler Charles Martel, spread the gospel all over Central Germany, and organized a national church in the lands on the Main and Saal, where previously Woden and his fellows alone had been worshipped. He died a martyr among the heathen of the Frisian Marshes in 733.

Prosperity of the Church.—Winfrith—Baeda—Alcuin.

Nor was the English Church less noted for its men of learning. Not only were they well versed in Latin, which was the common language of the clergy all over Europe, but some of them were skilled in Greek also, for the good Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus had instructed many in his native tongue. Among the old English scholars two deserve special mention: one is the Northumbrian Baeda (the Venerable Bede), a monk of Jarrow, who translated the Testament from Greek into English, and also wrote an ecclesiastical history of England which is our chief source for the knowledge of his times (d. 735); the second was another Northumbrian, Alcuin of York, whose knowledge was so celebrated all over Europe that the Emperor Charles the Great sent for him to Aachen, the Frankish capital, and made him his friend and tutor; for Charles ardently loved all manner of learning, and could find no one like Alcuin among his own people.

As long as Oswiu and his son Ecgfrith lived, Northumbria held the foremost place among the English kingdoms, and its rulers were accounted the chief kings of Britain. Ecgfrith conquered Carlisle and Cumbria from the Welsh, and even invaded Ireland, but in an attempt to add the highlands beyond the Forth to his realm, he was slain in battle by the Picts at Nechtansmere (685). With his death the greatness of Northumbria passed away, for his successors were weak men, and after a while grew so powerless that the kingdom was vexed by constant civil wars, and became

Reign of Ecgfrith.—Decline of Northumbria.

the prey of its neighbours, the Mercians on the south, and the Picts and Scots on the north.

Supremacy of Mercia, 675–796.—Reign of Offa.

The supremacy that had once been in the hands of the Northumbrians now passed away to the kings of Mercia, the largest and most central of the English kingdoms. Three great kings of that realm, Aethelred, Aethelbald and Offa, whose reigns occupied almost the whole of the period from 675 to 796, were all in their day reckoned as supreme lords of England. The rulers



of East Anglia, Essex, and Kent were counted as their vassals, and they deprived Wessex of its dominions north of the Thames, and Northumbria of all that it had held south of the Trent and the Ribble. Offa pushed his boundary far to the west, into the lands of the Welsh; and, after conquering the valleys of the Wye and the upper Severn, drew a great dyke from sea to sea, reaching from near Chester on the north to Chepstow on the south; it marked the boundary between the English and the Cymry for three hundred years. Offa was the greatest king whom England had yet seen, and corresponded on equal

terms with Charles the Great, the famous King of the Franks, who was his firm friend and ally (757-796)

Nevertheless, after Offa's day the sceptre passed away from Mercia, and his successors saw their vassal kings rebel and disown the Mercian allegiance. To maintain subject states in obedience was always a very hard task for the old English kings, because they had no standing armies, and no system of fortification. When a neighbouring realm was overrun by the tumultuary army of a victorious king, he had to be satisfied with the homage of its people, because he could not build fortresses in it, or leave a standing force to hold it down. The only way of keeping a conquest was to colonize it, as was done with the lands taken from the Welsh; but the English kings shrank from evicting their own kinsfolk, and seldom or never employed this device against them. Hence it always happened that, when a great king died, his vassals at once rebelled, and unless his successor was a man of ability he was unable to reconquer them.

Decline of Mercia.

From Mercia the primacy among the English states passed to Wessex, a state which had hitherto kept much to itself, and had busied itself in conquering land from the Welsh of Damnonia, rather than in striving with its English neighbours for the supremacy in mid-Britain. Wessex, indeed, had lost to the Mercians all its territory north of the Thames, and was now a purely south-country state. Its borders reached to the Tamar and the Cornish moors, since the days when Taunton in 710 and Exeter in 705 had fallen into the hands of its kings.

Supremacy of Wessex.—Ecgbert, 800-836.

The West-Saxon king who succeeded to the power of Offa was Ecgbert, the ancestor of all the subsequent monarchs of Britain down to our own day.* He was a prince who had seen many troubles in his youth, having been driven over sea by his kinsman and forced to take refuge with Charles the Great. He spent some years in the court and army of the Frankish monarch, but was called to the throne of Wessex in 800, on the death of his unfriendly cousin. In a long reign that lasted

* All kings, both Anglo-Saxon and Norman, since 820, descend from Ecgbert save Cnut, the two Harolds, and William I. The Conqueror's wife, Matilda of Flanders, had English blood in her veins, so William is the only exception in his line.

for thirty-six years, Ecgbert not only subdued the small kingdoms of Kent and Sussex, and made the Welsh princes of Cornwall do him homage, but he even dared at last to attack his powerful neighbours the Mercians. At the battle of Ellandun, in Wiltshire (823), he defeated and slew King Beornwulf, the unworthy heir of Offa's greatness. Shortly after Mercia did him homage, and the Northumbrians, sorely vexed by civil wars, soon followed the example of their southern neighbours.

Thus Ecgbert became over-lord of Britain, in the same sense that Eadwine and Offa had previously held the title. But the dominion of the kings of Wessex was destined to be of a more enduring nature than that of their predecessors. This was not so much due to their own abilities as to the changed condition of the state of England. Not only were there strong tendencies arising towards unity within the English realms—due most especially to the influence of their common Church—but pressure from without was now about to be applied in a way that forced the English to combine.

Before Ecgbert had come to the throne, and even before Offa was dead, the first signs had been seen of the coming storm that was to sweep over England in the second half of the ninth century. The Danes had already begun to appear off the coasts of the island.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DANISH INVASIONS, AND THE GREAT KINGS OF WESSEX.

THE English chronicles have accurately fixed for us the date of the first raid of the Northmen. In 787, three strange ships were seen off the Dorsetshire coast. From them landed a small band of marauders, who sacked the port of Wareham, and then hastily put to sea and vanished from sight. This insignificant descent was only the first of a series of dreadful ravages. A few years later, in 793, a greater band descended on Lindisfarne, the holy island of St. Cuthbert off the Bernician coast, the greatest and richest monastery of northern England. Thenceforth raids came thick and fast, till at last the sword of the invaders had turned half England into a desert.

The people of Scandinavia were at this moment in much the same state of development in which the English had been three centuries before, ere yet they left the shores of Saxony and Schleswig. The Danes and Norwegians were a hardy seafaring race, divided into many small kingdoms, always at war with each other. They were still wild heathens, and practised piracy as the noblest occupation for warriors and freemen. Just as Hengist and Aella had sailed out with their war-bands in search of plunder and land in the fifth century, so the chiefs of the Northmen were now preparing to lead out their followers into the western seas. For two centuries the onslaughts of the Vikings—as these piratical hordes were called—were fated to be the curse of Christendom. The Vikings in their early days were led, not by the greater kings of Denmark and Norway, but by leaders chosen by the pirate bands for their military abilities. Such chiefs were obeyed on the battle-field alone; off it they were

The Vikings.

treated with small respect by their comrades. There were dozens of these sea-kings on the water, each competing with the others for the largest following that he could get together.

The Northmen were at first seeking for nothing more than plunder. Western Christendom offered them a great field, because the Franks, English, and Irish of the ninth century almost all dwelt in open towns, had very few forts and castles, and had built enormous numbers of rich defenceless monasteries and churches. The Dane landed near a wealthy port or abbey, sacked it, and hastily took to sea again, before the country-side had time to muster in arms against him.

Their raids grow more permanent.

But after a time the continued successes of their first raids encouraged the Northmen to take the field in much greater numbers, so that fleets of a hundred ships, with eight or ten thousand men aboard them, were found sailing under some noted sea-king. When they grew so strong they took to making raids deeper into the land, boldly facing the force of an English shire or a Frankish county if they were brought to bay. When numbers were equal they generally had the advantage in the fray, for they were all trained warriors, and were fighting for their lives. Against them came only a rustic militia fresh from the plough. If beset by the overwhelming strength of a whole kingdom, they fortified themselves on a headland, an island, or a marsh-girt palisade, and held out till the enemy melted homeward for lack of provisions.

As long as Ecgbert lived he kept the Danes away from his kingdom of Wessex, dealing them heavy blows whenever they dared to march inland. The greatest of these victories was one gained at Hengistesdun (Hingston Down), near Plymouth, over the combined forces of the Danes and the revolted Welsh of Cornwall (835). But though he was able to protect his own realm, Ecgbert was unable to care for his Mercian and Northumbrian vassals ; they were too far off, and his authority over them was too weak. So northern England was already suffering fearfully from the Viking raids even before Ecgbert died. His son Aethelwulf, who succeeded him as king of Wessex, was a pious easy-going man, destitute of his father's strength and ability. If the Mercians and Northumbrians had not been so

Sufferings of Northumbria and Mercia.—Reign of Aethelwulf.

desperately afflicted at the moment by the ravages of the Vikings, they would have undoubtedly taken the opportunity to throw off the yoke of the Wessex kings. But their troubles made them cautious of adding civil war to foreign invasion, and so Aethelwulf was allowed to keep his father's nominal suzerainty over the whole of England. More than once he led a West-Saxon army up to aid the Mercians, but he could not be everywhere at the same time, and while he was protecting one point, the Danes would slip round by sea and attack another. Wessex itself was no longer secure from their incursions, and the chronicles record several disastrous raids carried out on its coast.

All through King Aethelwulf's reign (836–858) the state of England was growing progressively worse. Commerce was at a standstill, many of the larger towns had been burnt by the Danes, the greatest of the monasteries had been destroyed, and their monks slain or scattered ; with them perished the wealth and the learning which had made the English Church the pride of Western Christendom. The land was beginning to sink back into poverty and barbarism, and there seemed to be no hope left to the English, for the Viking armies grew larger and bolder every year.

The Danes threaten permanent occupation.

After a time the invaders began to aim at something more than transitory raids ; they took to staying over the winter in England, instead of returning to Norway or Denmark. Fortifying themselves in strong posts like the isles of Thanet or Sheppey, they defied King Aethelwulf to dislodge them. In a very short time it was evident that they would think of permanently occupying Britain, just as the Saxons and Angles had done three centuries back.

Aethelwulf, in great distress of mind, made a pilgrimage to Rome, and obtained the Pope's blessing for his efforts. But he fared none the better for that. It was equally in vain that he tried to concert measures for common defence with his neighbour across the Channel, King Charles the Bald, whose daughter Judith he took to wife. The Frankish king was even more vexed by the pirates than Aethelwulf himself, and no help was got from him.

The men of Wessex at last grew so discontented with

Aethelwulf's weak rule that the Witan deposed him, and elected his son Aethelbald king in his stead (856). But they left the small kingdoms of Kent and Sussex to the old man for the term of his natural life, to maintain him in his royal state. Aethelwulf died two years later, and after him reigned his three short-lived sons —Aethelbald (856–860), Aethelbert (860–866), and Aethelred (866–871).

Deposition of Aethelwulf, 856.—Winchester burnt, 864.

The fifteen years, during which they ruled, proved a time of even greater misery and distress than the latter days of their father's troubled reign. The Danes not only penetrated into every nook and corner of Mercia and Northumbria, but even struck at the heart of Wessex, and burnt its capital, the ancient city of Winchester (864).

But the sorest trial came two years later, in the time of King Æthelred. A vast confederacy of many Viking bands, which called itself the "Great Army," leagued themselves together and fell on England, no longer to plunder, but to subdue and occupy the whole land. Under two chiefs, called Ingwar and Hubba, they overran Northumbria in 867. The Northumbrians were divided by civil war, but the rival kings, Osbercht and Aella, joined their forces to resist the oncoming storm. Yet both of them were slain by the Danes in a great battle outside the gates of York, and the victors stormed and sacked the Northumbrian capital after the engagement. They then proceeded to divide up the land among themselves, and settled up all the old kingdom of Deira, from Tees to Trent. The English population was partly slain off, partly reduced to serfdom. So, after being for two hundred years a Christian kingdom, Deira became once more a community of wild heathen; the work of Oswald and Aidan seemed undone.

Conquest of Northumbria by the Danes.

D.

But the whole of the Danes of the "Great Army" could not find land in Deira. One division of them went off against the East Angles, under Jarl Ingwar, and fought a great battle with Edmund, the brave and pious king of that race. They took him prisoner, and when he would not do them homage or worship their gods, they shot him to death with arrows. His followers secretly buried his body, and raised over it a shrine which became the great abbey of St. Edmundsbury. East Anglia was then divided up among the

Conquest of East Anglia.

victorious Danes, just as Yorkshire had been; but they did not settle down so thickly in the eastern counties as in the north, and the share of Danish blood in those districts is comparatively small (869).

King Aethelred of Wessex had not been able to afford any practical help to his Northumbrian and East Anglian neighbours. It was now his own turn to face the storm which had overwhelmed the two northern realms. In 870 the "Great Army," now under two kings, Guthrum and Bagsaeg, sailed up the Thames and threw itself upon Surrey and Berks, the northern border of Wessex. Aethelred came out in haste against them, and with him marched his younger brother Alfred, the youngest of the four sons of the old Aethelwulf, a youth of eighteen, who now entered on his first campaign. The men of Wessex made a far sterner defence than had the armies of the other English kingdoms. The two warrior-brothers Aethelred and Alfred fought no less than six battles with the "Great Army" in the single year 871. The war raged all along the line of the chalk downs of Berkshire, as the Danes strove to force their way westward. At last the men of Wessex gave them a thorough beating at Ashdown, where the Etheling Alfred won the chief honour of the day. The defeated Vikings sought refuge in a stockaded camp at Reading, between the waters of the Thames and the Kennet. Aethelred could not dislodge them from this stronghold, and in a skirmish with one of their foraging parties at Merton, in Surrey, he received a mortal wound (871).

The Danes checked in Wessex.—Battle of Ashdown, 870.

Wearied with six battles, the army of Wessex broke up, and the thegns sadly bore King Aethelred home, to bury him at Wimborne. His young brother, the Etheling Alfred, succeeded him, and took up the task of defending Wessex in its hour of sore distress. It was fortunate that such a great man was at hand to bear the burden, for never was it more likely than now that the English name would be utterly swept off the face of the earth. In spite of his youth Alfred was quite capable of facing any difficulty or danger. From his boyhood upward he had always shown great promise; when a young child, he had been sent by his father, Aethelwulf, to Rome, and there had attracted the notice of Pope Leo, who

Alfred, King of Wessex, 871.

anointed him, and predicted that he should one day be a king. He was able and brave, like most of the descendants of Ecgbert, but he was also far above all men of his day in his desire for wisdom and learning, and from his earliest years was known as a lover of books and scholars. Seldom, if ever, did any king combine so much practical ability in war and governance with such a keen taste for literature and science.

Alfred had short space to mourn his dead brother. The "Great Army" soon forced its way up from the Thames into Wiltshire, and beat the men of Wessex at Wilton. Then Alfred gave them great store of treasure to grant him peace, and they—since they found that the winning of Wessex cost so many hard blows—consented to turn aside for a space. But it was only in order to throw themselves on the neighbouring realm of Mercia. They dealt with it as they had already done with Deira and East Anglia. They defeated Burgred, its king, who fled away over sea and died at Rome; and then they took eastern Mercia and parcelled it out among themselves, while they gave its western half to an unwise thegn called Ceolwulf, who consented to be their vassal and proffered them a great tribute. It was not long, however, before they chased away him also. Now it was that there arose the great Danish towns in Mercia—Derby, Stamford, Leicester, Lincoln, and Nottingham, which, under the name of the "Five Boroughs," played a considerable part in English history for the next two centuries (876).

He makes peace with the Danes.—Conquest of Mercia.

When Mercia had fallen, the Vikings turned once more against their old foes in Wessex. If only they could break down King Alfred's defences, they saw that the whole isle of Britain would be their own. So under the two kings, Guthrum and Hubba, they once more pushed southward beyond the Thames. There followed two years of desperate fighting (877–878). At first the invaders swept all before them. They took London, the greatest port of England, and Winchester, the capital of Wessex. Alfred, repeatedly beaten in battle, was forced westward, and driven to take refuge almost alone in the isle of Athelney, a marsh-girt spot in Somersetshire, between the Tone and the Parret. This was the scene of the celebrated legend of the burnt cakes. A curious memorial of Alfred's stay in Athelney is to be seen at Oxford—

Renewed invasion of Wessex.

a gold and enamel locket bearing his name,* which was dug up in the island some nine hundred years after it was dropped by the wandering king.

While Alfred was in hiding, the Danes ranged all over Wessex; King Guthrum settled down at a fortified camp at Chippenham, in Wiltshire, while King Hubba ravaged Devon. But when all seemed in their power, they were suddenly disconcerted by a new gathering of the stubborn West Saxons. The men of Devon slew Hubba and took his raven banner, and then Alfred, issuing from Athelney, put himself at the head of the levies of Devon, Somerset, and Dorset, and made a desperate assault on Guthrum and the main body of the Danes. The king was victorious at Ethandun (Eddington), and drove the army of Guthrum into its stockade at Chippenham. There the Vikings were gradually forced by starvation to yield themselves up. Alfred granted them easy terms: if they would promise to quit Wessex for ever, and would swear homage to him as over-lord, and become Christians, he would grant them the lands of the East Angles and East Saxons to dwell in. Guthrum was fain to accept, so he was baptized, and received at Alfred's hands the new name of Aethelstan. Many of his host followed him to the font, and then they retired to East Anglia and dwelt therein, save those roving spirits who could not settle down anywhere. These latter went off to harry France, but King Guthrum and the majority abode in their new settlement, and were not such unruly or unfaithful subjects to Alfred as might have been expected from their antecedents.

Defeat of the Danes.—Treaty of peace

In such troublous times it was not likely that Alfred would be free from other wars, but he came out of them all with splendid success. When new bands of Vikings assailed him in later years, he smote them again and again, and drove them out of the land. As a Norse poet once sang—

> "They got hard blows instead of shillings,
> And the axe's weight instead of tribute;"

so they betook themselves elsewhere, to strive with less valiant kings beyond the seas.

* The inscription reads "AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN," or "Alfred had me made."

By Alfred's agreement with Guthrum, England was divided into two halves, of which one was Danish and the other English. The old document called *Alfred's and Guthrum's Frith* gives the boundary of the Danelagh, or Danish settlement, thus: "Up the Lea and then across to Bedford, up the Ouse to Watling Street, and so along Watling Street to Chester." That is to say, that Northumbria and East Anglia and Essex, and the eastern half of Mercia, were left to the Danes, while Alfred reigned directly, not only over his own heritage of Wessex, Sussex, and Kent, but over western Mercia also. The nine counties * west of Watling Street became part of Wessex, so that Alfred's own kingdom came out of the Danish war much increased. Beyond its bounds he now had a nominal suzerainty over three Danish states, instead of four English ones. Guthrum reigned in the East, another Danish king at York, and between them lay the "Five Boroughs," which were independent of both kings, and were ruled by their own "jarls," as the Danes called their war-lords.

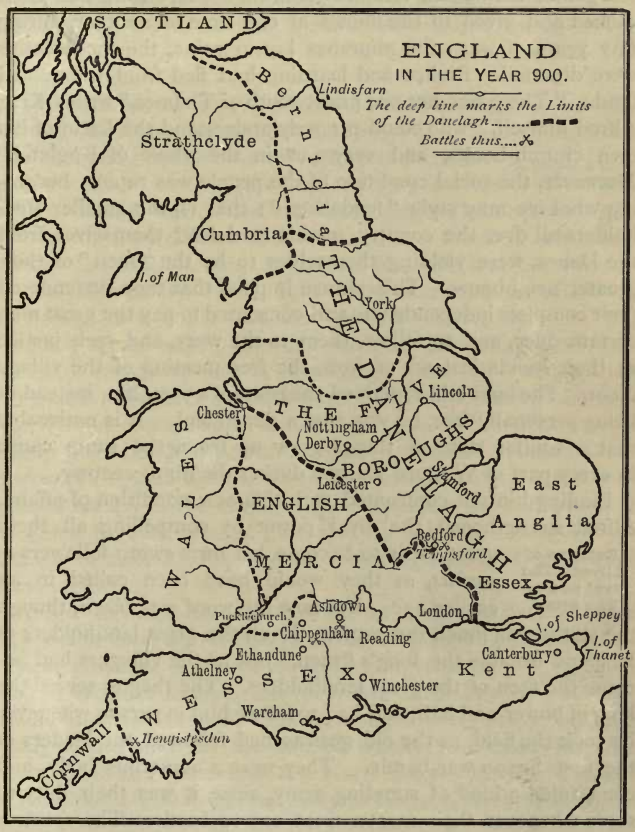
Division of Britain.

The Danish rule in North-Eastern England was made comparatively light to the old inhabitants of the land when Guthrum and his men embraced Christianity. Instead of killing the people off or reducing them to slavery, the Danes now were content to take tribute from them, and to occupy a certain portion of their lands. The limit and extent of the Danish settlement can be well traced by studying the names of places in the northern counties. Wherever the invaders established themselves we find the Danish termination *by* in greater or less abundance. We find such names strewn thick about Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and Leicestershire, less freely in Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, and the eastern counties. Rugby, close to the line of Watling Street, is the Danish settlement that lies furthest into the heart of Mercia. The Viking blood, therefore, is largely mixed with the English in the valleys of the Trent and Ouse, and close to the eastern coast, and grows proportionately less as Watling Street is approached. The Danes took very easily to English manners; they had all turned Christians within a very few years, and their language was so like Old English that their speech

Danish rule in England.

* Gloucester, Worcester, Hereford, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Bucks, Middlesex, Hertfordshire.

soon became assimilated to that of their subjects, and could only be told from that of South England by differences of dialect that gradually grew less. In the end England gained rather



than suffered by their invasion, for they brought much hardy blood into the land, and came to be good Englishmen within a very few generations.

But meanwhile, when they were but just settled down, and the

land was still black with their burnings, England appeared in a sorry state, and Alfred the king had a hard task before him when he set to work to reform and reorganize his wasted realm. Well-nigh every town had been sacked and given to the flames at one time or another, during fifty years of war: the churches lay in ruins, the monasteries were deserted. Riches and learning had fled from the wasted land. "There was not one priest south of Thames," writes King Alfred himself, "who could properly understand the Latin of his own church-books, and very few in the whole of England." Moreover, the social condition of the people was rapidly becoming what we may style "feudalized"; that is, the smaller freeholders all over the country, unable to defend themselves from the Danes, were yielding themselves to be the "men" of their greater neighbours. This phrase implied that they surrendered their complete independence, and consented to pay the great men certain dues, and to follow them to the wars, and seek justice at their hands instead of from the free meeting of the village moot. The land still remained the peasant's own, but, instead of being personally free, he was now a dependent. It is noticeable that a similar state of things grew up from the same cause in every part of Western Europe during the ninth century.

Effects of the Danish wars.

Finding himself confronted with this new condition of affairs, Alfred strengthened the royal power by compelling all these great lords to become his own sworn followers—*gesiths*, as they would have been called in an earlier age. But now the word was *thegn*, though the status was much the same. So all the great landholders of England became the king's "men," just as the villagers had become the men of the great landholders. The thegns served the king in bower and hall, and had to follow him in person whenever he took the field, as the old gesiths had followed the leaders of the first Saxon war-bands. They were a numerous body, and constituted a kind of standing army, since it was their duty to serve whenever their master went out to battle. The *fyrd*, or local militia of the villages, Alfred divided into two parts, one of which was always left at home to till the fields when the other half went out to war. It was at the head of his thegns and this reorganized fyrd that Alfred smote the Danes when they dared to invade his realm in his later years.

Reforms of Alfred.—The royal power—The army.

Alfred has a great name as a lawgiver, but he did more in the way of collecting and codifying the laws of the kings who were before him than in issuing new ordinances of his own. But since he made everything clear and orderly, the succeeding generations used to speak of the "laws of Alfred," when they meant the ancient statutes and customs of the realm.

The laws.

The most noteworthy, however, of Alfred's doings, if we consider the troublous times in which he lived, were his long-sustained and successful endeavours to restore the civilization of England, at which the Danish wars had dealt such a deadly blow. He collected scholars of note from the Continent, from Wales and Ireland, and founded schools to restore the lost learning for which England had been famed in the last century. His interest in literature of all kinds was very keen. He collected the old heroic epics of the English, all of which, save the poem of "Beowulf," have now perished, or survive only in small fragments. He compiled the celebrated "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," and left it behind him as a legacy to be continued by succeeding ages—as indeed it was for nearly three hundred years. He also translated Baeda's Latin history of England into the vernacular tongue, as well as Orosius' general history of the world. Nor was history the only province in which he took interest; he also caused Pope Gregory the Great's "Pastoral Care," and other theological works, to be done into English.

Learning and civilization.

Alfred may also be reckoned the father of the English navy. In order to cope with the ships of the Vikings, he built new war-vessels of larger size than any that had yet been seen in Western Europe, and provided that they should be well manned. He encouraged sailors to go on long voyages, and sent out the captain Othere, who sailed into the Arctic seas and discovered the North Cape. He was a friend of merchants, and it was probably to him that we may attribute the law which allowed any trader who fared thrice over-sea in his own ship to take the rank and privileges of a thegn.

The navy.

We have no space to tell of the many other spheres of Alfred's activity, such as his church-buildings, his mechanical inventions, and his zeal in almsgiving and missionary work, which was so great that he even sent contributions to the

distant Christians of St. Thomas in India. What heightens our surprise at the many-sided activity of the man is, that he was of a weakly constitution, and was often prostrated by the attacks of a periodical illness which clung to him from his youth up.

Alfred lived till 901 in great peace and prosperity. He had increased the bounds of Wessex, saved England from the Dane, and brought her back to the foremost place among the peoples of Western Europe, for his Frankish contemporaries were sinking lower and lower amid the attacks of the Vikings, while England, under his care, was so rapidly recovering her strength. Even the Welsh, hostile hitherto to all who bore the English name, had done homage to him in 885, because they saw in him their only possible protection against the Dane.

Renewed prosperity.—Alfred's successors.

Alfred's son and his three grandsons followed him on the throne in succession between the years 901 and 955. They were all brave, able, hard-working princes, the worthy offspring of such a progenitor. They carried out to the full the work that he had begun; while Alfred had checked the Danes and made them his vassals, his descendants completely subdued and incorporated them with the main body of the realm, so that they were no longer vassals, but direct subjects of the crown. And while Alfred had been over-king of England, his successors became over-kings of the whole isle of Britain, the suzerains of the Scots and the Welsh of Strathclyde, as well as of all the more southern peoples within the four seas.

Alfred's eldest son and successor was Edward, generally called Edward the Elder to distinguish him from two later kings of his line. He was a wise and powerful king, whose life-work was the incorporation of central England, south of the Humber, with his realm of Wessex, by the complete conquest of the Danes of East Anglia and the Five Boroughs. When Alfred was dead, his Danish vassals tried to stir up trouble by raising up against Edward his cousin Aethelwulf, son of Aethelred. This pretender the new king drove out, and then, turning on the eastern Danes, slew their king Euric, the son of Guthrum-Aethelstan, and made them swear homage to him again.

Edward the Elder, 901-925.—Incorporation of central England with Wessex.

But a few years later the Danes broke out again into rebellion,

and Edward then took in hand their complete subjection. His chief helper was the great ealdorman Aethelred of western or English Mercia, his brother-in-law. When this chief died, Edward found his widowed sister Aethelflaed, in whose hands he left the rule of the Mercian counties, no less zealous and able an assistant than her husband had been. It was with her co-operation that he started on his long series of campaigns against the Danes of central and eastern England. While Edward, starting forward from London, worked his way into Essex and East Anglia, Aethelflaed was at the same time urging on the Mercians against the Danes of the Five Boroughs. They moved forward systematically, erecting successive lines of "burghs," or moated and palisaded strongholds, opposite the centres of Danish resistance, and holding them with permanent garrisons.

The Danes were now much more easy to deal with than in the old days, for they had given hostages to fortune, and were the possessors of towns and villages which could be plundered, farmsteads that could be burned, and cattle that could be lifted. So when they found that they could not storm the "burghs" of Edward and Aethelflaed, or drive off the garrisons which raided on their fields, they began one after the other to submit. The last Danish king of East Anglia was slain in battle at Tempsford, near Bedford, in 921, and his realm was incorporated with Wessex. Then, while Aethelflaed compelled Derby and Leicester to yield, her brother subdued Stamford and Lincoln. So all England south of the Humber was won and cut up into new shires, like those of Wessex. Having accomplished her share in this great work, the Lady Aethelflaed died, and the great ealdormanry which she had ruled was absorbed into her brother's kingdom.

In their terror at Edward's ceaseless advance and never-ending successes, not only did the Danes of Northumbria do him homage, but even the distant kings of the Scots and the Strathclyde Welsh "took him to father and lord" in a great meeting held at Dore in 924.

Edward over-lord of all England.

Having thus become the over-lord of all Britain, Edward died in 925, leaving the throne to his son Aethelstan. This prince was his worthy successor, and carried out still further

the process of annexing all England to the Wessex inheritance. His great achievement was the complete subjection and annexation of Northumbria. When Sihtric the Danish King of York died, Aethelstan seized on his kingdom, and drove his sons over sea. The dispossessed princes stirred up enemies against their conqueror, and formed a great league against him. Anlaf, the king of the Danes of Ireland, brought over a great host of Vikings, while Constantine, king of the Scots, and Owen, king of Cumbria, came down from the north to join him. The Danes of Yorkshire at once rose in rebellion to aid the invaders. Against this league Aethelstan marched forth at the head of the English of Mercia and Wessex. He met them at Brunanburgh, a spot of unknown site, somewhere in Lancashire. There Aethelstan smote them with a great slaughter, so that Anlaf returned to Ireland with but a handful of men, and Constantine—who lost his son and heir in the fight—fled away hastily to his own northern deserts. The fight of Brunanburgh, the greatest battle that the house of Alfred had yet won, finally settled the fact that Danish England was to be incorporated with the realm of the Wessex over-kings, and that there was to be one nation, not two, from the borders of Scotland to the British Channel. This great victory drew from an unknown poet the famous "Song of Brunanburgh" which has been inserted in the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle." It tells of the glories of Aethelstan, and how—

Aethelstan, 925-941.—Subjection of Northumbria. —Battle of Brunanburgh.

> "Never was yet such slaughter
> In this island, since hitherward
> English and Saxons came up from the east,
> Over the broad seas, and won this our land."

The fight made Aethelstan once more lord of all Britain. The Scot king hastened to renew his submission, the Welsh and Cornish did him homage, the turbulent Northumbrian Danes bowed before him. He was considered so much the most powerful monarch in Western Europe, that all the neighbouring kings sought his alliance, and asked for the hands of ladies of his house. Of his sisters, one was married to the Emperor Otto I., one to Charles the Simple, King of the West Franks, others to the King of Arles and the Counts of Paris and Flanders.

Aethelstan died young, and left no son. He was followed on the throne by his two brothers Edmund and Eadred, who were equally unfortunate in being cut off in the flower of their age. Edmund suppressed more than one rebellion of the Northumbrian Danes, and completely conquered the Welsh kingdom of Strathclyde. Instead of incorporating it with England, he bestowed it as a fief on his vassal, Malcolm, King of the Scots, "on condition that he should be his faithful fellow-worker by sea and land." This was the first extension of Scotland to the south of the Clyde and Forth. Up to this time the Scots and the Picts, with whom they had become blended since the Scot Kenneth McAlpine had been elected king of the Picts in 836, had only ruled in the Highlands. Edmund came to a strange and bloody end. As he feasted in his hall at Pucklechurch, in Gloucestershire, he saw to his anger and surprise a notorious outlaw named Leofa enter the hall and seat himself at a table. The servants tried to turn him out, but he held his place, and Edmund grew so wrathful that he sprang from his high seat and rushed down to drag the intruder out with his own hands. He seized Leofa by the hair and threw him down, but the outlaw drew a knife and stabbed him to the heart.

Edmund, 941-946.—Strathclyde granted as a fief to the Scotch king.

Eadred, the next king, was a prince of weak health, fonder of the church than the battle-field. Nevertheless he carried on his brother's policy, and kept a firm hand over the whole island of Britain. He put down the last rising of the Danes of Yorkshire, who had proclaimed Eric-with-the-bloody-axe as their king, and made one last attempt to assert their independence. After this he cut up Northumbria into two earldoms, and gave them both to an Englishman named Oswulf, to be ruled as separate provinces.

Eadred, 946-955.

Eadred was the patron and protector of the wise abbot Dunstan, the first of the great clerical statesmen who made a mark on the history of England. He was a man of great ability and learning, who had risen to be abbot of Glastonbury under Edmund, and became one of the chief advisers of the pious Eadred, who was attracted to him as much by his asceticism as by his eminent mental qualities. Dunstan was a man with a purpose. He wished to reform the English Church in the direction of monastic asceticism, and

Rise of Dunstan.

was most especially anxious to make compulsory the celibacy of the clergy, a practice which had not hitherto been enforced in England. There was undoubtedly much ignorance and a certain amount of ill-living among the secular clergy, and Dunstan, not content with warring against this, tried also to reform the monasteries all over the face of the land, and to enforce the rule of St. Benedict, "poverty, chastity, and obedience," in every place. Dunstan's method of carrying out his views was by winning court influence, which he was very fitted to obtain, for he was the cleverest, most versatile, and most learned man of his day.

When the pious Eadred died, he was succeeded by his nephew Eadwig (Edwy), the son of his brother Edmund. This prince had been a child when Leofa the outlaw slew his father, and the Witan had put him aside in favour of his uncle, because the rule of a minor was always disliked by the English. But now he was seventeen, and a very rash and headstrong youth.

Eadwig, 955-959.—Quarrel with Dunstan.

Eadwig very soon quarrelled with Dunstan and with Oda, Archbishop of Canterbury, because he insisted on taking to wife the Lady Aelfgyfu (Elgiva), who was his near kinswoman, and within the "prohibited degrees" of the mediaeval Church. The churchmen declared her to be no true wife of the king, and treated the royal pair with such insult that Eadwig grew furious. The tale is well known how, when Eadwig at a high feast had retired betimes to his wife's chamber, Oda and another bishop followed him and dragged him back by force to the board where the thegns were feasting.

The king, as was natural, quarrelled with the Church party, and drove Dunstan out of England. But his clerical opponents were too much for him: they conspired with the Anglo-Danes of Northumbria, and with many discontented thegns, and set up against Eadwig his younger brother Eadgar, whom Archbishop Oda crowned as King of England. There followed civil war, in which Eadwig had the worst; his wife fell into the hands of Oda, who cruelly branded her with hot irons and shipped her to Ireland. Only Wessex adhered to the cause of Eadwig, and he was at last compelled to bow before his enemies. He acknowledged his brother as King of all England north of Thames, and died almost immediately after (959).

Triumph of the Church party.

His death put the whole realm into the hands of Eadgar, or rather of Eadgar's friends of the Church party, for the new king was still very young. He recalled Dunstan from exile to make him his chief councillor; and when Archbishop Oda died, he gave the see of Canterbury to him. For the seventeen years of Eadgar's rule Dunstan was his prime minister, and much of the character of the earlier years of the king's reign must be attributed to the prelate.

Eadgar, 959-975.—Ascendency of Dunstan.

Dunstan's policy had two sides: he used his secular powers to enforce his religious views, and everywhere he and his friends began reforming the monasteries by forcing them to adopt the Benedictine rule. They expelled the secular canons, many of whom were married men, from the cathedrals, and replaced them with monks. They also dealt severely with the custom of lay persons receiving church preferment, one of the commonest abuses of the time.

But Dunstan was not only an ecclesiastical reformer. His activity had another and a more practical side. To him, in conjunction with Eadgar, is to be attributed the complete unification of the Anglo-Danes and the English. Instead of being treated as subjects of doubtful loyalty, the men of the Danelagh were now made the equals of the men of Wessex, by being promoted to ealdormanries and bishoprics, and admitted as members of the Witan. Eadgar kept so many of them about his person that he even provoked the thegns of Wessex to murmuring. But the policy of trust and conciliation had the best effects, and for the future the Anglo-Danes may be regarded as an integral part of the English nation.

Complete conciliation of the Danes.—Power of Eadgar.

When he came to years of maturity, Eadgar proved to be a capable prince. His power was so universally acknowledged in Britain that his neighbours never dared attack him, and he became known as the *rex pacificus* in whose time were known no wars. All the kings of the island served him with exact obedience; the story is well known how he made his six chief vassals—the kings of Scotland, Cumbria, Man, and three Welsh chiefs—row him across the Dee, and then exclaimed that those who followed might now in truth call themselves kings of Britain.

Eadgar was a firm ruler, and the author of a very considerable

body of laws. To him is attributable the first organization of local police in England, by the issue of the "Ordinance of the Hundred," which divided the shires into smaller districts after the Frankish model, and made the inhabitants of each hundred responsible for the putting down of theft, robbery, and violence in their own district. He allowed the Danish half of England to keep a code of laws of its own, but assimilated it, as much as he was able, to that which prevailed in the rest of the land, making Dane and Englishman as equal in all things as he could contrive.

Legislation—The Ordinance of the Hundred.

To the misfortune of his realm, Eadgar died in 975, before he had attained his fortieth year, leaving behind him two young sons, neither of whom had yet reached his majority. When he was gone, it was soon seen how much the prosperity of England had depended on the personal ability of the house of Alfred. Under weak kings there began once more to arise great troubles for the land.

CHAPTER V.

THE DAYS OF CNUT AND EDWARD THE CONFESSOR.

FOR a full century (871-975) England had been under the rule of a series of kings of marked ability. Only the short reign of the unfortunate Eadwig interrupts the succession of strong rulers. We have seen how in that century England fought down all her troubles, and, after appearing for a time to be on the brink of destruction, emerged as a strong and united power. But on the death of Eadgar a new problem had to be faced—the kingdom passed to two young boys, of whom the second proved to be one of the most unworthy and incompetent monarchs that England was ever to know.

Edward the Younger, or the Martyr, as after-generations called him, only sat for three years on his father's throne. He endeavoured to follow in Eadgar's steps, and retained Dunstan as his chief councillor. But he found the great ealdormen unruly subjects; they would not obey a young boy as they had obeyed the great Eadgar. Dunstan was made the chief mark of their envy, because he represented the policy of a firm central government and a strong monarchical power. Probably they would have succeeded in getting him dismissed at the Witan held at Calne, if a supposed miracle had not intervened to save him. While his adversaries were pleading against him, the floor of the upper chamber where the Witan was sitting gave way, owing to the breaking of a beam, and they were precipitated into the room below, some being killed and others maimed. But the piece of flooring where Dunstan stood did not fall with the rest, so that he remained unharmed amid the general destruction, wherefore men deemed that God had intervened to bear witness to his innocence.

Edward the Martyr, 975-978.—Insubordination of the great ealdormen.

But Dunstan was not to rule much longer. In 978 his young

master was cruelly murdered by his step-mother, Queen Aelfthryth, who knew that the crown would fall to her own son if Edward died. For one day the king chanced to ride past her manor of Corfe, and, stopping at the door, craved a cup of wine. She brought it out to him herself, and while he was drinking it to her health, one of her retainers stabbed him in the back. His horse started forward, and he lost his seat and was dragged some way by the stirrup ere he died. The queen's friends threw the body into a ditch, and gave out that he had perished by an accidental fall, but all the realm knew or suspected the truth.

Nevertheless, Aelfthryth's boy Aethelred got the profit of his mother's wicked deed, for the Witan crowned him as the sole heir to King Eadgar. His long reign was worthy of its evil commencement, for it proved one unbroken series of disasters, and brought England at last to the feet of a foreign conqueror. He ruled for thirty-eight years of misery and trouble, for which he was himself largely responsible, for he was a selfish, idle, dilatory, hard-hearted man, and let himself be guided by unworthy flatterers and favourites, who sought nothing but their own private advantage. Wherefore men called him Aethelred the Redeless, that is the ill-counselled, because he would always choose the evil counsel rather than the good. Yet the king was not wholly to blame for the misfortunes of his reign, for the great ealdormen had their share in the guilt. Freed from the strong hand of Dunstan, who was soon driven away from the court, they acted as independent rulers, each in his own ealdormanry, quarrelled with each other, and disobeyed the king's commands. It was their divisions and jealousies and selfishness that made the king's weakness and idleness so fatal, for, when they refused to obey, he neither could nor would coerce them.

Aethelred the Redeless, 978-1016.—Decline of the kingly power.

The curse of the reign of Aethelred the Redeless was the second coming of the Danes and Northmen to England. For many years they had avoided this island, because they knew that only hard blows awaited them there. But they swarmed all over the rest of Europe, won Normandy from the kings of the West Franks, and pushed their raids as far as the distant shores of Andalusia and Italy. But the news that a weak young king, with disobedient nobles to rule

Viking invasions.—The Danegelt.

under him, sat on Eadgar's seat, soon brought them back to England. First there came mere plundering bands, as in the old days of the eighth century; but Aethelred did not deal with them sharply and strongly. He bade the ealdormen drive them off; but they were too much occupied with their own quarrels to stir. Then the invaders came in greater numbers, and Aethelred thought to bribe them to go away by giving them money, and raised the tax called the *Danegelt* to satisfy their rapacity. But it seemed that the more that gold was given the more did Danes appear, for the news of Aethelred's wealth and weakness flew round the North, and brought swarm after swarm of marauders upon him. Then followed twenty miserable years of desultory fighting and incessant paying of tribute. Sometimes individual ealdormen fought bravely against the Danes, and held them at bay for a space; sometimes the king himself mustered an army and strove to do something for the realm; sometimes he tried to hire one band of Vikings to fight against another, with the deplorable results that might have been expected. His worst and most unwise action was the celebrated massacre of St. Brice's Day, in 1002, when he caused all the Danes on whom he could lay hands to be killed. In this case it was not open enemies whom he slew, for it was a time of truce, but Danish merchants and adventurers who had settled down in England and done him homage. By this cruel deed Aethelred won the deadly hatred of Swegen, King of Denmark, whose sister and her husband had been among the slain.

Swegen became Aethelred's bitterest foe, and repeatedly warred against him, not with mere Viking bands, but with the whole force of Denmark at his back, a great national army bent on serious invasion of the land, not on transient raiding. The English were driven to despair by Swegen's ravages, and the king did nothing to save them. He had now fallen entirely into the hands of an unscrupulous favourite, named Eadric Streona, or *the Grasper*, and was guided in all things by this low-born adventurer. He even created him Ealdorman of Mercia, and made him the second person in the land. Eadric cared only for ruining any noble who could possibly be his rival, and for enlarging his ealdormanry; of the defence of England he took no more thought than did his master.

Ravages of Swegen of Denmark.—Eadric "the Grasper."

At last, in 1013, there came a Danish invasion of exceptional severity. The marauders dashed through the country from end to end; they took Canterbury and slew the good Archbishop Elfheah (St. Alphege), because he refused to pay them an exorbitant ransom. Then Eadric gathered together the Witan, without the king's presence, and, with infamous treachery to his benefactor, proposed to them to submit entirely to the Danes. So when Swegen came over again in the next year, the whole realm bowed before him, and the great men, headed by the traitor Eadric, offered him the crown. Only London held out for King Aethelred, and stood a long siege, till its citizens learnt that their master had deserted them and fled over sea to the Duke of Normandy, whose sister Emma he had married. Then they too yielded, and the Witan of all England took Swegen as their king. But the Dane died immediately after his election, and then the majority of the English refused to choose his son Cnut as his successor. They sent to Normandy for their old king, and did homage once more to Aethelred; but the traitor Eadric resolved to adhere to Cnut, because he had lately murdered the thegns of the Five Boroughs, and dreaded the wrath of their followers. So Eadric's Mercian subjects and some of the men of Wessex joined the Danes, and there was civil war once more in England, till Aethelred the Ill-counselled died in 1016.

Swegen chosen king by the Witan.

Then his followers chose in his stead his brave son Edmund II., who was called Ironside because of his prowess in war. The new king was a worthy descendant of Alfred, and would have made no small mark in better times, but he spent his short reign in one unceasing series of combats with Cnut, a man as able and as warlike as himself. The two young kings fought five pitched battles with each other, and fortune swayed to Edmund's side; but in the sixth, at Assandun (Ashington, in Essex), he was defeated, owing to the treachery of the wretched Eadric the Grasper, who first joined him with a large body of Mercian troops, and then turned against him in the heat of the battle (1016).

Edmund Ironside and Cnut. 1016.

Then Edmund and Cnut, having learnt to respect each other's courage, met in the Isle of Alney, outside the walls of Gloucester, and agreed to divide the realm between them. Cnut took, as was natural, the Anglo-Danish districts of Northumbria and the

Five Boroughs, together with Eadric's Mercian ealdormanry. Edmund kept Wessex, Kent, London, and East Anglia. But this partition was not destined to endure. Ere the year was out the foul traitor Eadric procured the murder of King Edmund, and then the Witan of Wessex chose Cnut as king over the south as well as the north. The late king's young brothers and his two little sons fled to the Continent.

So Cnut the Dane became King of all England, and ruled it wisely and well for nineteen years (1016-35). He proved a much better king than people expected, for, being a very young man and easily impressed, he grew to be more of an Englishman than a Dane in all his manners and habits of thought. He ruled in Denmark and Norway as well as in this island, but he made England his favourite abode, and regarded it as the centre and heart of his empire. The moment that he was firmly established on the throne, he took measures for restoring the prosperity of the land, which had been reduced to an evil plight by forty years of ill-governance and war. He swept away the great ealdormen who had been such a curse to the land, slaying the traitor Eadric the Grasper, and Uhtred the turbulent governor of Northumbria. Then he divided England into four great earldoms, as these provinces began to be called, for the Danish name *jarl* (earl) was beginning to supersede the Saxon name ealdorman. Of these he entrusted the two Anglo-Danish earldoms, Northumbria and East Anglia, to men of Danish blood, while he gave Wessex and Mercia to two Englishmen who had served him faithfully, the earls Godwine and Leofric. The confidence in the loyalty of his English subjects which Cnut displayed was very marked: he sent home to Denmark the whole of his army, save a body-guard of two thousand or three thousand *house-carles*, or personal retainers, and did not divide up the lands of England among them. He kept many Englishmen about his person, and even sent them as bishops or royal officers to Denmark, a token of favour of which the Danes did not altogether approve. He endeavoured to connect himself with the old English royal house, by marrying Emma of Normandy, the widow of King Aethelred, though she was somewhat older than himself, so Cnut's younger children were the half-brothers of Aethelred's.

The empire of Cnut.

Cnut gave England the peace which she had not known since

the death of Eadgar, for no one dared to stir up war against a king who was not only Lord of Britain, but ruled all the lands of the Northmen, as far as Iceland and the Faroes and the outlying Danish towns in Ireland. The Welsh and Scots served Cnut as they had served Aethelstan and Eadgar, and were his obedient vassels. In reward of the services of Malcolm of Scotland Cnut gave him the district of Lothian, the northern half of Bernicia, to hold as his vassal. This was the first piece of English-speaking land that any Scottish king ruled, and it was from thence that the English tongue and manners afterwards spread over the whole of the Lowlands beyond the Tweed.

He gives Lothian to the King of Scotland.

The rapid recovery of prosperity which followed on Cnut's strong and able government is the best testimony to his wisdom. The wording of the code of laws which he promulgated is a witness to his good heart and excellent purposes. His subjects loved him well, and many tales survive to show their belief in his sagacity, such as the well-known story of his rebuke to the flattering courtiers who ascribed to him omnipotence by the incoming waves of Southampton Water.

Cnut died in 1035, before he had much passed the boundary of middle age. He left two sons, Harold and Harthacnut, the former the child of a concubine, the latter the offspring of Queen Emma. With his death his empire broke up, for Norway revolted, and the Danes of Denmark chose Harthacnut as their king, while those of England preferred the bastard Harold. Only Godwine, the great Earl of Wessex, declared for Harthacnut, and made England south of the Thames swear allegiance to him. So Harold reigned for a space in Northumbria and Mercia, while Denmark and Wessex obeyed his younger brother. The two sons of Cnut were rough, godless, unscrupulous young men, and hated each other bitterly, for each thought that the other had robbed him of part of his rightful heritage. Moreover, Harold enraged Harthacnut by catching and slaying his elder half-brother Alfred, the son of Aethelred and Emma, whom he enticed over to England by fair words, and then murdered by blinding him with hot irons.

The sons of Cnut, 1035-1042.

After a space Harold overran Wessex, which Earl Godwine surrendered to him because Harthacnut sent no aid from Denmark,

where he tarried over-long. But just after he had been saluted as ruler of all England, Harold died, and his realm fell to his absent brother. Harthacnut then came over with a large army, and took possession of the land. He ruled ill for the short space of his life; it was with horror that men saw him exhume his half-brother's corpse and cast it into a ditch. He raised great taxes to support his Danish army, and dealt harshly with those who did not pay him promptly. But just as all England was growing panic-stricken at his tyranny, he died suddenly. He was celebrating the marriage of one of his followers, Osgood Clapa, at the thegn's manor of Clapham, in Surrey, when, as he raised the wine-cup to drink the bridegroom's health, he fell back in an apoplectic fit, and never spoke again (1042).

The English Witan had now before them the task of choosing a new king. Cnut's house was extinct, and with it died all chance of the perpetuation of a northern empire in which England and Denmark should be united. It was natural that the council should cast their eyes back on the old royal house of Alfred, for its eldest member was at this time in England. Harthacnut had called over from Normandy Edward, his mother's second son by King Aethelred, the younger brother of that Etheling Alfred whom Harold had murdered five years before.

Edward the Confessor. 1042-1066.

It was with little hesitation, therefore, that the Witan, led by Earl Godwine, the greatest of the rulers of the realm, elected Edward to fill the vacant throne. The prince's virtues were already known and esteemed, and his failings had yet to be learnt. Edward was now a man of middle age, mild, pious, and well-meaning, but wanting in strength and vigour, and needing some strong arm on which to lean. He had spent his whole youth in Normandy, at the court of Duke Richard, his mother's brother, and had almost forgotten England and the English tongue during his long exile. Just as Cnut had become an Englishman, so Edward had become for all intents and purposes a Norman.

During the first few years of his reign in England, the new king was entirely in the hands of Godwine, the great Earl of Wessex. He married the thegn's daughter Eadgyth (Edith), and entrusted him with the greater part of the administration of the realm. But Edward and Godwine were not likely to remain friends;

Godwine, Earl of Wessex.—The king's Norman favourites.

there were several causes of dispute between them. The most important was the fact that the king secretly believed that Godwine had been a consenting party to the murder of his brother Alfred by King Harold. But the most obvious was Godwine's dislike for the Norman favourites of the king. For Edward sent for all the friends of his youth from Normandy, and gave them high preferment in England, making Robert of Jumiéges Archbishop of Canterbury, and bestowing bishoprics on other Norman priests, and an earldom on Ralf of Mantes, his own nephew. He also showed high favour to two more of his continental kinsmen, Eustace, Count of Boulogne, and William the Bastard, the reigning duke of Normandy. William declared that Edward had even promised to leave the crown of England to him at his death; and it is possible that the king may have expressed some such wish, but he had not the power to carry it out, for the election of the English kings lay with the Witan, and not with the reigning sovereign.

The troubles of Edward's reign began in 1050, starting from a chance affray at Dover. Eustace of Boulogne was landing to pay a visit to the king, when some of his followers fell into a quarrel with some of the citizens. Men were slain on both sides, and the count was chased out of the town with hue and cry. The king took this ill, and bade Godwine—in whose earldom Dover lay—to punish the men who had insulted his noble kinsman. But Godwine refused, saying—what was true enough—that the count's followers were to blame, and the burghers in the right. Edward was angry at the earl's disobedience, and called to him in arms those of the English nobles who were jealous of Godwine, especially Leofric, the Earl of Mercia, and Siward, the Earl of Northumbria. Godwine also gathered a host of the men of Wessex, and it seemed that civil war would begin. But the earl was unwilling to fight the king, and when the Witan outlawed him, he fled over seas to Flanders with his sons, Harold, Swegen, and Tostig. Edward then fell entirely into the hands of his Norman favourites. He sent his wife, Godwine's daughter, to a nunnery, and disgraced all who had any kinship with the exiled earl. But the governance of the Norman courtiers was hateful to the English, and when Godwine and his sons came back a year later, and sailed up the Thames

Exile and return of Godwine.

with a great fleet, the whole land was well pleased. No one would fight against him, and the Norman bishops and knights about the king's person had to fly in haste to save their lives. Then the Witan inlawed Godwine again, and Edward was obliged to give him back his ancient place (1052). So the great earl once more ruled England, holding Wessex himself, while his second son Harold ruled as earl in East Anglia, and his third son Tostig became the king's favourite companion, though he was a reckless, cruel man, very unlike the mild and pious Edward.

The house of Godwine kept a firm control over the realm during the last fourteen years of Edward's reign. When Godwine died suddenly at a great feast at Winchester,* his son Harold succeeded both to his earldom of Wessex and to his preponderant power in England. The years of Harold's governance were on the whole a time of prosperity, for he was a busy, capable man, much liked by all the English of the south, though the Mercians and Northumbrians did not love him so well.

Death of Godwine.—His son Harold takes his place.

Harold knew how to make the authority of the King of England over his smaller neighbours respected. It was during his tenure of power that Siward, earl of Northumbria, was sent into Scotland to put down Macbeth, the lord of Moray, who had murdered King Duncan and seized his crown. Siward slew Macbeth in battle at Lumphanan, and restored to the throne of Scotland Malcolm, the eldest son of the late king (1054). A little later Harold himself took the field to put down Gruffyd, the King of North Wales, who had risen in rebellion. He drove the Welsh up into the crags of Snowdon, and besieged them there till they slew their own king and laid his head at the earl's feet.

It was somewhere about this time that a misfortune fell upon Harold. He was sailing in the Channel, when a storm arose and drove his ship ashore on the coast of Ponthieu, near the Somme-mouth. Wido, the Count of Ponthieu, an unscrupulous and avaricious man, threw the earl into prison, and held him to ransom. But

Harold's detention in Normandy.

* The Norman historians of a later generation made a very impressive scene of Godwine's death. The king and the earl were dining together, it was said, when Edward spoke out his suspicion that Godwine had been concerned in his brother Alfred's murder. "May the crust that I am eating choke me," cried the earl, "if I had any hand in his death." Forthwith he swallowed it, was seized with a fit, and died on the spot.

William, Duke of Normandy, who was Wido's feudal superior, delivered him from bonds, and brought him to his court at Rouen. Harold abode with the duke for some time, half as guest, half as hostage, for William would not let him depart. He went on an expedition against Brittany with the Normans, and received knighthood at the duke's hands. After a time he was told that he might return home if he would engage to use all his endeavours to get William elected King of England at the death of Edward. The duke said that he had gained such a promise from Edward himself, and thought he could make sure of the prize with Harold's aid. Thus tempted, the earl consented to swear this unwise and unjust oath, and in presence of the whole Norman court vowed to aid William's candidature. When he had sworn, the duke showed him that the shrine at which he had pledged his faith was full of the bones of all the saints of Normandy, which had been secretly collected to make the oath more solemn.

So Harold returned to England, and—as it would appear—soon forgot his oath altogether, or thought of it only as extorted by force and fear. He had anxieties enough to distract his mind to other subjects. First Mercia gave trouble, because Aelfgar, the son of Earl Leofric, was jealous of Harold's predominance in the realm. He twice took arms and was twice outlawed for treason. Nevertheless, Harold confirmed his son Eadwine in the possession of the Mercian earldom. Next, Northumbria broke out into armed rebellion. The king had made his favourite Tostig, Harold's younger brother, earl of the great northern province when the aged Siward, the conqueror of Macbeth, died. But Tostig ruled so harshly and so unjustly, that the Anglo-Danes of Yorkshire rose in rebellion, put Morcar, the son of Aelfgar of Mercia, at their head, and drove Tostig away. When Harold investigated the matter, he found that Tostig was so much in the wrong that he advised the king to banish his brother, and to confirm Morcar in the Northumbrian earldom. This resolve, though just and upright, weakened Harold's hold on the land, for Mercia and Northumbria were thus put in the hands of the two brothers, Eadwine and Morcar, who worked together in all things and were very jealous of the great Earl of Wessex, in spite of his kindly dealings with them (1065).

Dissensions in England.—Eadwine and Morcar.

Less than a year after Tostig's deposition King Edward died. The English mourned him greatly, for, in spite of his weakness and his tendency to favour the Normans over-much, he was an upright, kindly, well-intentioned man, whom none could hate or despise. Moreover, his sincere piety made the English revere him as a saint; it was said that he had divine revelations vouchsafed to him, and that St. Peter had once appeared to him in a vision and given him a ring. It is, at any rate, certain that he built the Abbey of Westminster in St. Peter's honour, and lavished on it a very rich endowment. The English looked back to Edward's reign as a kind of golden age in the evil times that followed, and worshipped him as a saint; but the good governance of the realm owed far more to Godwine and Harold than to the gentle, unworldly king.

Death of King Edward.

On Edward's death the Witan had to choose them a king. The next heir of the house of Alfred was a child, Eadgar the Etheling, the great-nephew of the deceased monarch. He was only ten years of age, and there was no precedent for electing so young a boy to rule England. Outside the royal line there were two persons who were known to desire the crown: the first was the man who had for all practical purposes governed England for the last fourteen years, Earl Harold of Wessex, the late king's brother-in-law; the other was William the Norman. It was said that Edward had once promised to use his influence in his Norman cousin's favour, but it is certain that on his death-bed he recommended Harold to the assembled thegns and bishops. The Witan did not waver for a minute in their decision; they chose Harold, and he accepted the crown without any show of hesitation. Yet it was certain that his elevation would bring on him the bitter jealousy of the young Earls of Mercia and Northumbria, who regarded themselves as his equals, in every respect. And it was equally clear that William of Normandy, who had counted on Harold's assistance in his candidature for the throne, would vent his wrath and disappointment on the new king's head (Jan., 1066).

Harold elected king by the Witan.

Harold attempted to conciliate the sons of Aelfgar by paying them every attention in his power, and by marrying their sister Ealdgyth. But to appease the stern Duke of Normandy

he knew was impossible, and he looked for nothing but war from that quarter. Indeed, he was hardly mounted on the throne before William sent over ambassadors to formally bid him fulfil his oath and resign the crown, or take the consequences. It need hardly be added that Harold replied that the Witan's choice was his mandate, and that his oath had been extorted by force.

Claim of William of Normandy to the crown.

The Duke of Normandy was firmly resolved to assert his baseless claim to the throne by force of arms. He had a large treasure and many bold vassals, but he knew that his own strength was insufficient for such an enterprise as the invasion of England. Accordingly, he proclaimed his purpose all over Western Europe, and offered lands and spoil in England to every adventurer who would take arms in his cause. William's military reputation was so great, that he was able to enlist thousands of mercenaries from France, Brittany, Flanders, and Aquitaine. Of the great army that he mustered at the port of St. Valery, only one-third were native Normans. William took six months for his preparation; he had to build a fleet, since Harold had a navy able to keep the Channel, and to beat up every free-lance that could be hired to take service with him. Nor did he neglect to add spiritual weapons to temporal: he won over the Pope to give his blessing on the invasion of England, because Harold had broken the oath he swore on the bones of all the saints, and had become a perjurer. There were other reasons for Pope Alexander's dislike for the English. Stigand, Harold's Archbishop of Canterbury, had acknowledged an anti-Pope, and Rome never forgave schism; moreover, the house of Godwine had not been friendly to the monks, but had been patrons of Dunstan's old foes, the secular canons. Alexander therefore sent William his blessing, and a consecrated banner to be unfurled when he should land in England.

He prepares to invade England.

Hearing of William's vast preparations, Harold arrayed a fleet to guard the narrow seas, and bade the fyrd of all England to be ready to muster on the Sussex coast. He was prepared to defend himself, and only wondered at the delay in his adversary's sailing, a delay which was caused by north-westerly winds, which kept the Normans storm-bound.

Suddenly there came to Harold disastrous and unexpected

news from the north. His exiled brother Tostig had chosen this moment to do him an ill turn. He had gone to the north, and persuaded Harald Hardrada, the King of Norway, to invade England. Hardrada was the greatest Viking that ever existed, the most celebrated adventurer by sea and land of his age. When Tostig offered him the plunder of England, he took ship with all his host and descended on Northumbria. Morcar, the young earl of that region, came out to meet him, with his brother Eadwine at his side. But Hardrada defeated them with fearful slaughter before the gates of York, and took the city.

Harald Hardrada invades Northumbria.

When Harold of England heard this news he was constrained to leave the south, and risk the chance of William's landing unopposed. He took with him his house-carles, the great band of his personal retainers, and marched in haste on York, picking up the levies of the midland shires on the way.

Harold marches northward.—Battle of Stamford Bridge.

So rapidly did Harold move, that he caught the Northmen quite unprepared, and came upon them at Stamford Bridge, close to York, when they least expected him. There he defeated the invaders in a great battle. Its details are unfortunately lost, for the noble Norwegian saga that gives the story of Hardrada's fall was written too long after to be trusted as good history. It tells how the English king rode forward to the invading army, and, calling to his brother, offered him pardon and a great earldom. But Tostig asked what his friend Harald of Norway should receive. "Seven feet of English earth, seeing that he is taller than other men," answered Harold of England. Then Tostig cried aloud that he would never desert those who had helped him in his day of need, and the fight began. We know that both the rebel earl and the Norse king fell, that the raven banner of the Vikings was taken, and that the remnant only of their host escaped. It is said that they came in three hundred ships, and fled in twenty-four.

Harold of England was celebrating his victory at York by a great feast a few nights after the battle of Stamford Bridge, when a message was brought him that William of Normandy had crossed the Channel and landed in Sussex with a hundred thousand men at his back. Harold hurried southward with his house-carles, bidding the Earls

Landing of the Normans.

Eadwine and Morcar bring on the levies of Mercia and Northumbria to his aid as fast as they might. But the envious sons of Aelfgar betrayed their brother-in-law, and followed so slowly that they never overtook him. Harold marched rapidly on London, and gathered up the fyrd of East Anglia, Kent, and Wessex, so that he reached the coast with a considerable army, though it was one far inferior in numbers to William's vast host. Not a man from Mercia or Northumbria was with him; but the levies of the southern shires, where the house of Godwine was so well loved, were present in full force.

William had now been on shore some ten or twelve days, and had built himself a great intrenched camp at Hastings. But the King of England, as befitted the commander of the smaller host, came to act on the defensive, not on the offensive. He took post on the hill of Senlac, where Battle Abbey now stands, and arrayed his army in a good position, strengthened with palisades. He was resolved to accept battle, though his brother Gyrth and many others of his council bade him wait till Eadwine and Morcar should come up with the men of the north, and meanwhile, to sweep the land clear of provisions and starve out William's army. The Norman duke desired nothing more than a pitched battle; he knew that he was superior in numbers, and believed that he could out-general his adversary. When he heard that Harold had halted at Senlac, he broke up his camp at Hastings, and marched inland. The English were found all on foot, for they had not yet learnt to fight on horseback, drawn up in one thick line on the hillside, around the dragon-banner of Wessex and the standard of the Fighting Man, which was Harold's private ensign. The king's house-carles, sheathed in complete mail, and armed with the two-handed Danish axe, were formed round the banners; on each flank were the levies of the shires, an irregular mass where well-armed thegns and yeomen were mixed with their poorer neighbours, who bore rude clubs and instruments of husbandry as their sole weapons.

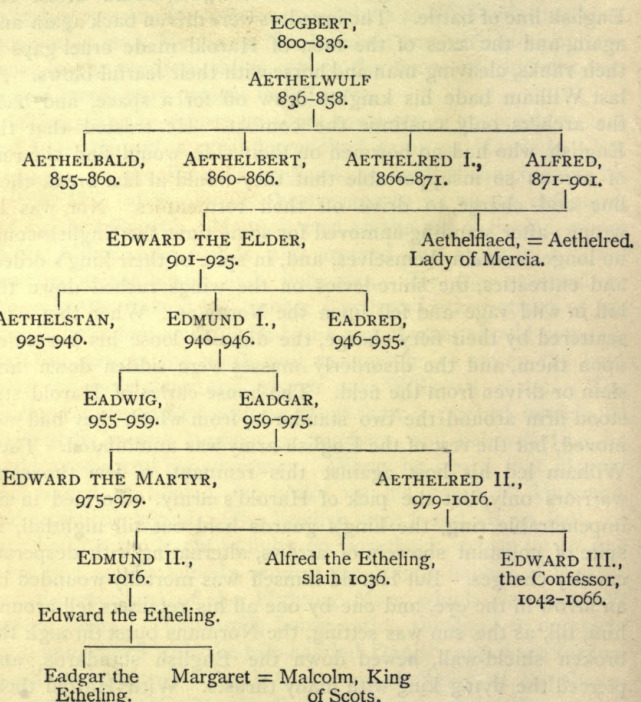
The battle of Hastings.

William's army was marshalled in a different way. The flower of the duke's host was his cavalry, and the Norman knights were the best horse-soldiery in Europe. His army was drawn up in three great bodies, the two wings composed of his French, Flemish, and Breton mercenaries, the centre

of the native Normans. In each body the mounted men were preceded by a double line of archers and troops on foot.

The two hosts joined in close combat, and for some hours the fighting was indecisive. Neither the arrows of the Norman bowmen, nor the charges of their knights, could break the English line of battle. The invaders were driven back again and again, and the axes of the men of Harold made cruel gaps in their ranks, cleaving man and horse with their fearful blows. At last William bade his knights draw off for a space, and bade the archers only continue the combat. He trusted that the English, who had no bowmen on their side, would find the rain of arrows so insupportable that they would at last break their line and charge, to drive off their tormentors. Nor was he wrong; after standing unmoved for some time, the English could no longer contain themselves, and, in spite of their king's orders and entreaties, the shire-levies on the wings rushed down the hill in wild rage and fell upon the Normans. When they were scattered by their fiery charge, the duke let loose his horsemen upon them, and the disorderly masses were ridden down and slain or driven from the field. The house-carles of Harold still stood firm around the two standards, from which they had not moved, but the rest of the English army was annihilated. Then William led his host against this remnant, a few thousand warriors only, but the pick of Harold's army. Formed in an impenetrable ring, the king's guards held out till nightfall, in spite of constant showers of arrows, alternating with desperate cavalry charges. But Harold himself was mortally wounded by an arrow in the eye, and one by one all his retainers fell around him, till, as the sun was setting, the Normans burst through the broken shield-wall, hewed down the English standards, and pierced the dying king with many thrusts. With Harold there fell his two brothers Gyrth and Leofwine, his uncle Aelfwig, most of the thegnhood of Wessex, and the whole of his heroic band of house-carles.

THE ENGLISH KINGS OF THE HOUSE OF ECGBERT.



CHAPTER VI.

THE NORMAN CONQUEST.

WILLIAM pitched his tents among the dead and dying where the English standards had stood. Next day he could judge of the greatness of his success, and see that the English army had been well-nigh annihilated. He vowed to build a great church on the spot, in memory of his victory, and kept his resolve, as Battle Abbey shows to this day. At first he wished to cast out his fallen rival's body on the sea-shore, as that of a perjurer and an enemy of the Church ; but better counsels prevailed, and he finally permitted the canons of Waltham to bury Harold's corpse in holy ground. It is said that no one was able to identify the king among the heaps of stripped and mutilated slain except Edith with the Swan's Neck, a lady whom he had loved and left in earlier days.

William expected to encounter further resistance, and marched slowly and cautiously on London by a somewhat circuitous route, crossing the Thames as high up as Wallingford. But he met with no enemy. Dover, Canterbury, Winchester, and the other cities of the south yielded themselves up to him. In fact, Wessex had been so hard hit by the slaughter at Hastings, that scarce a thegn of note survived to organize resistance. Every grown-up man of Godwine's house had fallen, and of the whole race there remained but two young children of Harold's. Meanwhile the Witan met at London to elect a new king. The two sons of Aelfgar, whose treacherous sloth had ruined England, had hoped that one of them might be chosen to receive the crown ; but their conduct had been observed and noted, and rather than take Eadwine or Morcar as lord, the Witan chose the last heir of the house of Aelfred, the boy Eadgar, great-nephew to St. Edward. This choice was hopelessly bad when a victorious enemy was

William elected and crowned in London.

thundering at the gates. Eadwine and Morcar disbanded their levies, and went home in wrath to their earldoms. The south could raise no second army to replace that which had fallen at Hastings, and when William pressed on toward London the followers of Eadgar gave up the contest. As he lay at Berkhamstead, the chief men of London and Ealdred, the Archbishop of York, came out to him, and offered to take him as lord and master. So he entered the city, and there was crowned on Christmas Day 1066, after he had been duly elected in the old English fashion. A strange accident attended the coronation: when the Archbishop Ealdred proposed William's name to the assembly, and the loud shout of assent was given, the Norman soldiery without thought that a riot was beginning, and cut down some of the spectators and fired some houses before they discovered their mistake. So William's reign began, as it was to continue, in blood and fire.

Eadwine and Morcar and the rest of the English nobles soon did homage to William; but the realm was only half subdued, for, save in the south-east, where the whole manhood of the land had been cut off at Hastings, the English had submitted more for want of leaders and union than because they regarded themselves as conquered. It remained to be seen how the new king would deal with his realm, whether he would make himself well loved by his subjects, as Cnut had done, or whether he would become a tyrant and oppressor. William, though stern and cruel, was a man politic and just according to his lights. He wished to govern England in law and order, and not to maltreat the natives. But he was in an unfortunate position. He knew nothing of the customs and manners of the English, and could not understand a word of their language. Moreover, he could not, like Cnut, send away his foreign army, and rely on the loyalty of the people of the land. For his army was a rabble of mercenaries drawn from many realms outside his own duchy, and he had promised them land and sustenance in England when they enlisted beneath his banner. Accordingly, he had to begin by declaring the estates of all who had fought at Hastings, from Harold the king down to the smallest freeholder, as forfeited to the crown. This put five-sixths of the countryside in Wessex, Essex, Kent, and East Anglia into the king's hands.

Confiscations in south-east England.

These vast tracts of land were distributed among the Norman, French, Flemish, and Breton soldiery, in greater and smaller shares, to be held by feudal tenure of knight-service from the king's hands.

In the rest of England, those of the native landowners who had not fought at Hastings were allowed to "buy back their lands." That is, they paid William a fine, made him a formal surrender of their estates, and then received them back from him under the new feudal obligations, becoming *tenants-in-chief* of the crown; agreeing to hold their manors directly from the king as his personal dependents and vassals. So there was no longer any land in England held by the old German freehold tenure, where every man was the sole proprietor of his own soil.

Other freeholders become tenants of the crown.

If things had stopped here, northern England would have remained in the hands of the old landholders, while southern England passed away to Norman lords. But the rapacious followers of the Conqueror were soon to get foot in the north also. William went back to Normandy in 1067, leaving his brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, regent in his stead. The moment that he was gone, the new settlers began to treat the English with a contempt and cruelty which they had not dared to show in their master's presence, and Odo rather encouraged than rebuked them. There followed the natural result, a widespread rising in those parts of England which had not yet felt the Norman sword. Unfortunately for themselves, the English rose with no general plan, and with no unity of purpose, every district fighting for its own hand. The western counties sent for the two sons of Harold, who came to Exeter, and were there saluted as hereditary chiefs of Wessex. But in Northumbria the insurgents proclaimed the Etheling Eadgar as king; and in Mercia there arose a thegn, Eadric the Wild, who was descended from the wicked Eadric Streona, and wished to reassert hereditary claims to his ancestor's earldom.

Risings in the west and north.

William immediately returned to England, and attacked the rebels. They gave each other no aid; each district was subdued without receiving any succour from its neighbour. William first marched against Exeter, took it after a long siege, and drove the young sons of Harold over sea to Ireland. Then he moved into Mercia, and chased

The rebels subdued.—Further confiscations.

Eadric the Wild into Wales, clearing Gloucestershire and Worcestershire of insurgents. The North made a perfunctory submission, and a Norman earl, Robert de Comines, was set over it. These abortive insurrections led to much confiscation of landed property in the west and north, which was at once portioned out among William's military retainers (1068).

But there was hard fighting to follow. In the spring of 1069 a second and more serious rising broke out in Northumbria. The insurgents took Durham, slew Earl Robert, and sent to ask the aid of the Kings of Scotland and Denmark. They were headed by Waltheof, Earl of Northampton and Huntingdon, the son of that Siward who had vanquished Macbeth. Both the monarchs who had been asked for aid consented to join the rebels. Malcolm Canmore of Scotland had married Margaret, the sister of the Etheling Eadgar, and thought himself bound to aid his brother-in-law. Swegen of Denmark, on the other hand, had hopes of the English crown, to which, as Cnut's successor, he thought he might lay some claim. Waltheof and his army ere long took York, and killed or captured the whole Norman garrison. But after this success the allies drifted apart; Swegen did not care to make Eadgar King of England, and Eadgar's party were angry with the Danes for ravaging and plundering on their own account. When William came up against York with a great host, the Danes took to their ships and left the English unaided. William was too strong for the Northumbrians; he routed them, retook York, and then set to work to punish the country for its twice repeated rebellion. He harried the whole of the fertile Yorkshire plain, from the Humber to the Tees, with fire and sword. The entire population was slain, starved, or driven away. Many fled to Scotland and settled there; others took to the woods and lived like savages. Several years passed before any one ventured forth again to till the wasted lands, and when the great *Domesday Book* was compiled—nearly twenty years after—it recorded that Yorkshire was still an almost unpeopled wilderness. While William was venting his wrath on the unfortunate Northumbrians, the Danish king, instead of aiding the insurgents, sailed up the Nen to Peterborough, and sacked its great abbey, the pride of the Fenland; this act completely ruined the already failing cause of the English, who would not trust the Danes any longer.

Second rising in Northumbria.—Yorkshire desolated.

Meanwhile William marched at midwinter through the snow-covered heights of the Peakland, from York to Chester, to crush out the last smouldering fires of the insurrection on the North-Welsh border. Cheshire and Shropshire bowed before him, and there was then nothing left of the English hosts, save a few scattered bands of fugitives. Waltheof, the leader of the rebellion, submitted to the king, and, to the surprise of all men, was pardoned and restored to his earldom. The Danes returned to Denmark, bribed by William to depart (1070). But the last remnants of the English gathered themselves together in the Fenland under Hereward the Wake, a Lincolnshire man, the most active and undaunted warrior of his day. Hereward fortified himself in an entrenched camp on the Isle of Ely, in the heart of the Fens, and defied the king to reduce him. For more than a year he held his own, and beat off every attack, though William brought up thousands of men and built vast causeways across the marshes in order to approach Hereward's camp of refuge.

Final subjugation of the west —Hereward the Wake.

It was at this moment, when the Isle of Ely was the only spot in England that was not in William's hands, that the foolish and selfish earls Eadwine and Morcar thought proper to rebel and take arms against the Normans. They had long lost all influence, even among their own followers, and were crushed with ease. Eadwine fell in a skirmish; Morcar escaped almost alone to Hereward's camp. Soon afterwards that stronghold fell, betrayed to William by the monks of Ely (1071). Hereward escaped, but most of his followers were captured. The king blinded or mutilated many of them, and put Morcar in close prison for the rest of his life. But he offered pardon to Hereward, as he had to Waltheof, for he loved an open foe. The "Last of the English" accepted his terms, was given some estates in Warwickshire, and is found serving with William's army in France a year later.

End of Eadwine and Morcar.—Hereward pardoned.

The English never rose again; their spirit was crushed; ruined by their own disunion and by the selfishness of their leaders, they felt unable to cope any longer with the stern King William. Any trouble that he met in his later years was not due to native rebellions, but to the turbulence and disloyalty of his own Norman followers. Those of the English who could not

bear the yoke patiently, fled to foreign lands, many to the court of Scotland, where Queen Margaret, the sister of the Etheling Eadgar, made them welcome; some even as far as Constantinople, to enlist in the "Varangian guard" of the Eastern emperor.

The monarchy feudalized.—Villeinage.

In the fifteen years that followed, William recast the whole fabric of the English society and constitution, changing the realm into a feudal monarchy of the continental type. Even before the Conquest the tendency of the day had been towards feudalism, as is shown by the excessive predominance of the great earls in the days of Aethelred the Ill-counselled and Edward the Confessor, and by the decreasing importance of the smaller freeholders. As early as Eadgar's time a law bade all men below the rank of thegn to "find themselves a lord, who should be responsible for them;" that is, to commend themselves to one of their greater neighbours by a tie of personal homage. But the old-English tie of vassalage, though it placed the small freeholders in personal dependence on the thegns, left them their land as their own, and allowed a man to transfer his allegiance from one lord to another. When, however, the English thegnhood had fallen on Senlac Hill, or had lost their manors for joining in the rebellion of 1069, the condition of their former dependents was much changed for the worse. The Norman knights, who replaced the thegns, knew only the continental form of feudal tenure, where the land, as well as the personal obedience of the vassal, was deemed to belong to the lord. So the English *ceorls*, who had been the owners of their own land, though they did homage to some thegn for their persons, were reduced to the lower condition of *villeinage*—that is, they were regarded as tilling the lord's land as tenants, and receiving it from him, in return for a rent in service or in money due to him. And instead of the land being considered to belong to the farmer, the farmer was now considered to belong to the land; that is, he was bound to remain on it and till it, unless his lord gave him permission to depart, being *glebae ascriptus*, bound to the soil, though he could not, on the other hand, be dispossessed of his farm, or sold away like a slave. The condition of the *villein* was at its very worst in William's reign, because the burden was newly imposed, and because the Norman masters, who had just taken possession of the English manors, were foreigners who did not comprehend a word of their tenants'

speech, or understand their customs and habits. They felt nothing but contempt for the conquered race, whom they regarded as mere barbarians; and hard as was the letter of the feudal law, they made it worse by adding insult to mere oppression. They crushed their vassals by incessant *tallages*, or demands for money over and above the rent in money or service that was due, and allowed their Norman stewards and underlings to maltreat the peasantry as much as they chose. It should be remembered also that, evil though the plight of the villein might be, there were others even more unhappy than he, since there were many among the peasantry who were actually slaves, and could be bought and sold like cattle. These were the class who represented the original *theows* or slaves of the old English social system.

Feudalism, then, so far as it meant the complete subjection of the peasant, both in body and in land, to the lord of his manor, was perfected in England by the Norman conquest. But there was another aspect of the feudal system, as it existed on the continent, which England was fortunate enough to escape. The crowning misery of the other lands of Western Europe was that the king's power in them had grown so weak, that he could not protect his subjects against the earls and barons who were their immediate lords. In France, for example, the king could not exercise the simplest royal rights in the land of his greater vassals, such as the Duke of Normandy or the Count of Anjou. All regal functions, from the coining of money to the holding of courts of justice, had passed to the great vassals. Even when a count or duke rebelled and declared war against the king, his liegemen were considered bound to follow their master and take part in his treason. Now William was determined that this abuse should never take root in England. He was careful not to allow any of his subjects to grow too strong; in distributing the lands of England he invariably scattered the possessions of each of his followers, so that no one man had any great district entirely in his hands. He gave his favourites land in eight or ten different counties, but in each they only possessed a fraction of the whole. There were only three exceptions to this rule. He created "palatine earls" in Cheshire, Shropshire, and Durham, who had the whole shire in their hands, and were allowed to hold their own courts of justice

Predominance of the crown.

and raise the taxation of the district, like the counts of the continent. These exceptional grants were made because they were frontier shires, and the earls were intended to be bulwarks against the king's enemies—Chester and Shropshire against the Welsh, and Durham against the Scots.

In the rest of England the king kept the local government entirely in his own hands, using the sheriffs (shire-reeves), who had existed since the early days of the kings of Wessex, as his deputies. It was the sheriff who raised the taxes, led the military levy of the shire to war, and presided in the law courts of the district. The sheriffs, whom the king nominated as men whom he could completely trust, were the chief check on the earls and barons. Their office was not hereditary ; they were purely dependent on the king, and he displaced them at his pleasure. By their means, William kept the government of England entirely in his own hands, and never allowed his greater vassals to trench upon his royal rights.

The sheriffs.

William also enunciated a most important doctrine, which clashed with the continental theory of feudalism. He insisted that every man's duty to the king outweighed that to his immediate feudal suzerain. If any lord opposed the king and bade his vassals follow him, the vassals would be committing high treason if they consented to do so. Their allegiance to the crown was more binding than that which they owed to their local baron or earl.

Doctrine of direct allegiance to the crown.

Although, then, the Norman conquest turned England into a feudal hierarchy, where the villein did homage to the knight, the knight to the earl, the earl to the king, yet the strength of the royal power gained rather than lost by the change. William was far more the master of his barons than was St. Edward of his great earls like Godwine or Siward. And this was not merely owing to the fact that William was a strong and Edward a weak man, but much more to the new political arrangements of the realm. William never allowed an earl to rule more than one shire, while Godwine or Leofric had ruled six or seven. William's sheriffs were a firm check on the local magnates, while Edward's had been no more than the king's local bailiffs. Moreover, there were many counties where William made no earl at all, and where his sheriff was therefore the sole representative of authority.

The kingly power, too, was as much strengthened in the central as in the local government. The Saxon Witan had represented the nation as opposed to the king: it had an existence independent of him, and we have even seen it depose kings. The Norman "Great Council," on the other hand, which superseded the Witan,* was simply the assembly of the king's vassals called up by him to give him advice. Though the class of persons who were summoned to it was much the same as those who had appeared at the Witan—bishops, earls, and so forth—yet they now came, not as "the wise men of England," but as the king's personal vassals, his "tenants-in-chief." All who held land directly from the crown might appear if they chose, but as a matter of fact it was only the greater men who came; the knights and other small freeholders would not as a rule visit an assembly where their importance was small and their advice was not asked.

The Great Council.

William's hand was felt almost as much by the Church as by the State. He began by clearing away, one after another, all the English bishops; Wulfstan of Worcester, a simple old man of very holy life, was ere long the sole survivor of the old hierarchy. Their places were filled by Normans and other foreigners, the primatial seat of Canterbury being placed in the hands of Lanfranc of Pavia, a learned Italian monk who had long been a royal chaplain, and had afterwards been made Abbot of Bec; he was always the best and most merciful of the king's counsellors. William and Lanfranc brought England into closer touch with the continental Church than had been known in earlier days. This was but natural when we remember that it was with the Pope's blessing and under his consecrated banner that the land had been conquered. The new Norman bishops continued Dunstan's old policy of favouring the monks at the expense of the secular clergy, and of establishing everywhere strict rules of clerical discipline. Their stern asceticism was not without its use, for the English clergy had of late grown somewhat lax in life, and unspiritual and worldly in their aims. It was with Lanfranc's aid that William took a step in the organization of the Church that was destined to be a sore trouble

William and the Church.—Ecclesiastical Courts.

* The native English writers, for some time after the Conquest, continued to call it the Witan, merely because they had as yet found no other name for it.

to his successors in later days. Hitherto offences against the law of the Church had been tried in the secular courts, and this was not felt to be a grievance by the clergy, because the bishops and abbots both sat in the Witan and attended the meetings of the local shire courts, where such offences—bigamy, for example, or perjury, or witchcraft, or heresy—were tried. But William and Lanfranc now gave the bishops separate Church courts of their own, and withdrew the inquiry into all ecclesiastical cases from the king's court. Though William did not grasp the fact, he was thus erecting an institution which might easily turn against the royal power, as the ecclesiastical judges in their new courts were not under the control of the crown, and had no reason to consult the king's interests. But in William's own time the Church-courts gave no trouble, for they had not yet learnt their power, and the bishops dreaded the king's arm too much to offend him. For William was no slave of the Church; when Pope Gregory VII. bade him do homage to the papacy for his English crown, because he had won England under the papal blessing, he sturdily refused. He announced also that he would outlaw any cleric who carried appeals or complaints to Rome without his permission, and he forbade the clergy to excommunicate any one of his knights for any ecclesiastical offence, unless the royal permission were first obtained.

We have already mentioned the fact that in the last fifteen years of his reign William had little or no trouble with his English subjects. But his life was far from being an easy one; he had both foreign enemies to meet and a turbulent baronage to keep down. Many of the new earls and barons were not born subjects of William, but Flemings, French, or Bretons, who looked upon him as merely the chief partner in their common enterprise of the conquest of England; even among the Normans themselves many were turbulent and disloyal. Within ten years of the Conquest, the king had to take arms against a rebellion of some of his own followers. Ralf, Earl of Norfolk, and Roger, Earl of Hereford, took counsel against him, and tried to enlist in their plot Waltheof, the last surviving English Earl. "Let one of us be king, and the two others great dukes, and so rule all England," was their suggestion to him, when they had gathered all their friends together under the pretence

Rebellion of Earls of Norfolk and Hereford.—Execution of Waltheof.

of Earl Ralf's marriage feast. Waltheof refused to join the rebellion, but thought himself in honour bound not to disclose the conspiracy to the king. When the two earls took arms they soon found that William was too strong for them. Ralf fled over sea; Roger was taken and imprisoned for life. Of their followers, some were blinded and some banished. But the hardest measure was dealt out to Earl Waltheof, whose only crime had been his silence. William was anxious to get rid of the last great English territorial magnate; he tried Waltheof for treason before the Great Council, and, when he was condemned, had him at once executed at Winchester (1076). His earldoms of Northampton and Huntingdon were, however, allowed to pass to his daughter, who married a Norman, Simon of St. Liz.

Some few years after the abortive rising of Ralf and Roger, the king found worse enemies in his own household. His eldest son and heir, Robert, began to importune him to grant him some of his lands to rule, and begged for the duchy of Normandy. But William was wroth, and drove him away with words of sarcastic reproof. The headstrong young man fled from his father's court and took refuge with Philip, the French king, William's nominal suzerain. Supported by money and men from France, Robert made war upon his father, and defeated him at the fight of Gerberoi (1079). Both father and son rode in the forefront of the battle. They met without knowing each other, and William was unhorsed and wounded by his son's lance. Only the courage of an English thegn, Tokig of Wallingford, who gave his horse to his fallen master, and received a mortal wound while helping him to make off, saved William from death. It must be added that Robert was deeply moved when he learnt how near he had been to slaying his own father, and then he immediately after sought pardon, and received it. But he had lost the first place in the king's heart, which was given to his second son William, whose fidelity was always unshaken. Robert was not the only kinsman of the Conqueror who justly incurred his wrath. His brother Bishop Odo angered him sorely by his cruel and oppressive treatment of Northumbria, and still more by raising a private army to make war over-seas; William seized him and kept him shut up in prison as long as he lived.

Rebellion of William's son Robert.

Disputes with foreign powers also arose to vex William's later

years. In 1084, Cnut, King of Denmark, threatened to invade the island, and such a heavy *Danegelt* was raised to pay the mercenary army which the king levied against him, that it is said that no such grievous tax had ever before been raised in England. Yet Cnut never came, being slain by his own people ere he sailed. Less threatening, but more perpetually troublesome than the danger of a Danish invasion, were William's broils with Philip of France, who even in time of peace was always stirring up strife. But Philip, though nominally ruler of all France, was practically too weak to cope with William, since his authority was quietly disregarded by most of the counts and dukes who owned him as liege lord.

Threatened Danish invasion.

It was probably the difficulty that had been found in raising men and money to resist the expected Danish invasion of 1084, that led William to order the compilation of the celebrated *Domesday Book* in 1085. This great statistical account of the condition of England was drawn up by commissioners sent down into every shire to make inquiry into its resources, population, and ownership. Therein was set down the name of every landholder, with the valuation of his manors, and an account of the service and money due from him to the king. It did not give merely a rent-roll of the estates, but a complete enumeration of the population, divided up by status into tenants-in-chief of the crown, sub-tenants who held under these greater landowners, burgesses of towns, free "*sokmen*," villeins, and serfs of lower degrees. Under each manor was given not only the name of its present holder and its actual value, but also a notice of its proprietor in the time of King Edward the Confessor, and of its value at Edward's death. This enables us to form an exact estimate of the change in the ownership of the lands of England brought about by the Conquest. We see that of the great English earls and magnates not a single one survived; all their lands had been confiscated and given away at one time or another. Of the thegns of lower degree some still retained their land, and had become the king's tenants-in-chief; many had sunk into sub-tenants of a Norman baron, instead of holding their estate directly from the crown; but still more had lost their heritage altogether. In some counties, especially in the south-east, where the whole thegnhood had fallen at Hastings, hardly a single English proprietor survived,

Domesday Book.

In others, such for example as Wiltshire or Nottingham, a large proportion of the old owners remained; but, on the whole, we gather that three-quarters of the acreage of England must have changed masters between 1066 and 1085. We discover also that while some parts of England had suffered little in material prosperity from the troublous times of the Conquest, others had been completely ruined. Yorkshire shows the worst record, a result of William's cruel harrying of the land in 1070; manor after manor is recorded as "waste," and the whole county shows a population less by far than that of the small shire of Berks.

Having ascertained by the completion of Domesday Book the exact names, status, and obligations of all the landholders of England, William used his knowledge to bid them all come to the Great Moot of Salisbury in 1086, where every landed proprietor, whether tenant-in-chief or sub-tenant, did personal homage to the king, and swore to follow him in all wars, even against his own feudal superior if need should so arise.

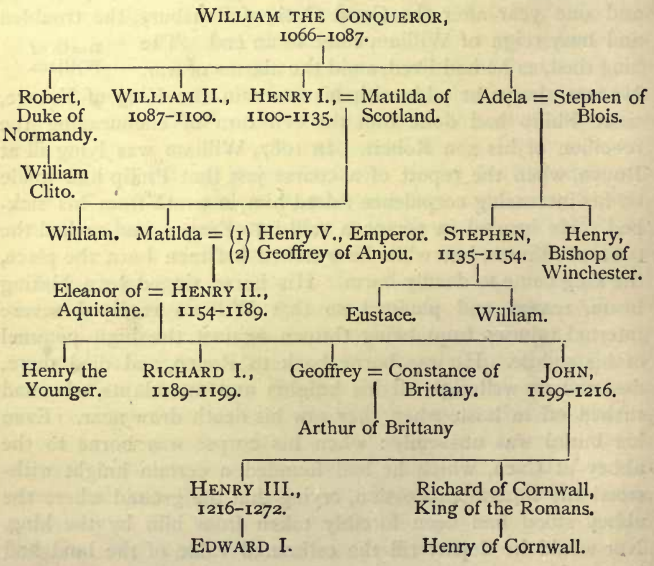
The great Moot of Salisbury.

Two years after the compilation of the Domesday survey, and one year after the Great Oath of Salisbury, the troubled and busy reign of William came to an end. The king died, as he had lived, amid the alarms of war. He was always at odds with his suzerain, the King of France, since Philip had done him the evil turn of encouraging the rebellion of his son Robert. In 1087, William was lying ill at Rouen, when the report of a coarse jest that Philip had made on his increasing corpulence raised him in wrath from his sick-bed. He headed in person a raid into France, and sacked the town of Mantes, but while he watched his men burn the place, the king came to deadly harm. His horse, singed by a blazing beam, reared and plunged so that William received severe internal injuries from being thrown against the high pommel of his saddle. He was borne back to Rouen, and died there, deserted by well-nigh all his knights and attendants, who had rushed off in haste when they saw his death draw near. Even his burial was unseemly: when his corpse was borne to the abbey at Caen, which he had founded, a certain knight withstood the funeral procession, crying that the ground where the abbey stood had been forcibly taken from him by the king. Nor would he depart till the estimated value of the land had been paid over to him.

Death of William.

Thus ended King William, a man prudent, untiring, and brave, and one who was pious and just according to his own lights, for he governed Church and State as one who deemed that he had an account to render for his deeds. But he was so unscrupulous in his ambition, so ruthless in sweeping away all who stood in his path, so much a stranger to pity and mercy, that he was feared rather than loved by his subjects, Norman as well as English. No man could pardon such acts as his harrying of Yorkshire, or forget his cruel forest laws, which inflicted death or mutilation on all who interfered with his royal pleasure of the chase. "He loved the tall deer as if he was their father," it was said, and ill did it fare with the unhappy subject who came between him and the favoured beasts. England has had many kings who were worse men than William the Bastard, but never one who brought her more sorrow, from the moment that he set foot on the shore of Sussex down to the day of his death.

THE HOUSE OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.



CHAPTER VII.

WILLIAM THE RED—HENRY I.—STEPHEN. 1087–1154.

THE eighty years which followed the death of William the Conqueror were spent in the solution of the problem which he had left behind him. William had brought over to England two principles of conflicting tendency—the one that of strong monarchical government, where everything depends on the king; the other that of feudal anarchy. He himself had been able to control the turbulent horde of military adventurers among whom he had distributed the lands of England, but would his sons be equally successful? We have now to see how two strong-handed kings kept down the monster of feudal rebellion; how one weak king's reign sufficed to put the monarchy in the gravest danger; and how, finally, William's great-grandson quelled the unruly baronage so that it was never again a serious danger for the rest of England's national life.

William had left behind him three sons. To Robert the eldest, the rebel of 1079, he had bequeathed, not the English crown, but his own ancient heritage of Normandy. William the Red, the second son, who had always been his father's loyal helper, was to be King of England. Henry, the youngest son, was left only a legacy of £5000; the Conqueror would not parcel out his dominions any further, but said that his latest-born was too capable a man not to make his own way in the world. **William's sons.**

William the Red hurried over to England the moment that the breath was out of his father's body, and was duly crowned by Lanfranc the archbishop. But it was no easy heritage that he took up; the Conqueror's death was the instant signal for the outbreak of **Risings of the barons.—Loyalty of the English.**

feudal anarchy. All the more turbulent of the Norman barons and bishops, headed by Odo of Bayeux, who had just been released from prison, took arms, garrisoned their castles, and began to harass their neighbours. They made it their pretext that Duke Robert, as the eldest son, ought to succeed his father in all his dominions; but their true reason for espousing his cause was that Robert was known to be a weak and shiftless personage, under whose rule every great man would be able to do whatever he might please. In order to defeat this rising William the Red took the bold step of throwing himself upon the loyalty of the native English. He summoned out the militia of the shires, proclaiming that every man who did not follow his king to the field should be held *nithing*, a worthless coward, and promising that he would lighten his father's heavy yoke and rule with a gentle and merciful hand. The fyrd turned out in unexpected strength and loyalty, and with its aid William put down all the Norman rebels, and drove them out of the realm. Duke Robert, who had prepared to come to their aid, was too late, and had to return to his duchy foiled and shamed.

Character and policy of William II.

William's promise that he would be a good and easy lord to his subjects was not kept for long. The new king was in all things an evil copy of his father: he had William's courage and ability, but none of his better moral qualities; he had no sense of justice, and was not restrained by any religious scruples. He was, indeed, an open atheist, and scoffed at all forms of religion, scornfully observing that he would become a Jew if it was made worth his while. Moreover, his private life was infamous, and no man who cared for honour or purity could abide at his court.

Nevertheless, his government was far more tolerable than the anarchy of baronial rule would have been. If he sheared his subjects close himself, he took care that no one else should molest them, and one bad master is always better than many. Under him England was cruelly taxed, and many isolated acts of oppression were committed, but he put down civil war, overcame his foreign enemies, and ruled victoriously for all his days.

Of William's exploits, those which were the most profitable for the peace of England were his enterprises against the Scots and the Welsh. Malcolm Canmore, though he had done

homage to William I., repeatedly led armies into England against William's son. In this first Scottish war the Red King, though his fleet was destroyed by a storm, compelled Malcolm to submit, and took from him the city of Carlisle and the district of Cumberland. This land, the southern half of the old Welsh principality of Strathclyde, had been tributary to the Scots ever since King Edmund granted it to Malcolm I. in 945. It now became an English county and bishopric, and the border of England was fixed at the Solway, and no longer at the hills of the Lake District (1092). Only a year later the Scottish king again invaded England, but was slain at Alnwick. He ran into an ambush which the Earl of Northumberland laid for him, and fell; with him died his son Edward and the best of his knights. The Scottish crown passed, after much fighting and contention, to Eadgar, Malcolm's second son by his English wife Margaret, the sister of Eadgar the Etheling. This prince, trained up by his pious and able mother, and aided and counselled by his uncle the Etheling, was the first King of Scotland who spoke English as his native tongue, and made the Lowlands his favourite abode. He surrounded himself with English followers, and ceased to be a mere Celtic lord of the Highlands, as his fathers had been.

War with Scotland.—Cumberland finally becomes English.

William the Red's arms were as successful against Wales as against Scotland. During his reign the southern half of the land of the Cymry was overrun by Norman barons, who won for themselves new lordships beyond the Wye and Severn, and did homage for them to the king. Many of these adventurers married into the families of the South Welsh princes, and became the inheritors of their local power. In North Wales the Normans pushed across the Dee, and built great castles at Rhuddlan and Flint and Montgomery, but they could not win the mountainous districts about Snowdon, where the native chiefs still maintained a precarious independence.

South Wales partly occupied by the Normans.

Beyond the British seas William waged constant war with his brother Robert, and always had the better of his elder, for the duke, though a brave soldier, was a very incapable ruler, and lost by his shiftless negligence all that he gained by his sword. He was forced in

William obtains possession of Normandy.

1091 to cede several of his towns to William, and to promise to make him his heir if he should die without male issue. But in 1096 the king gained possession of the whole, and not a mere fraction, of the Norman duchy. For Robert, seized with a sudden access of piety and a spirit of wandering and unrest, vowed to go off to the First Crusade, which was then being preached. In order to get the money to fit out a large army, he unwisely mortgaged the whole of his lands to his grasping brother for the very moderate sum of £6666. So William ruled Normandy for a space, and Robert went off with half the baronage of Western Christendom, to deliver the Holy Sepulchre from the Turks, and to set up a Christian kingdom in Palestine. Among his companions were the Etheling Eadgar, and many Englishmen more. The duke fought so gallantly against the infidel that the Crusaders offered him the crown of Jerusalem; but he would have none of it, and set his face homeward after four years of absence (1099).

William's extortions.—Quarrel with the Church.—Anselm.

King William meanwhile had been ruling both England and Normandy with a high hand. He and his favourite minister, Ralf Flambard, had been devising all manner of new ways for raising money. When a tenant of the crown died, they would not let his son or heir succeed to his estate till he had paid an extortionate fine to the king. When a bishop or an abbot died, they kept his place empty for months—or even for years—and confiscated all the revenues of the see or abbey during the vacancy. It was on this question that there broke out the celebrated quarrel between William the Red and Archbishop Anselm. When Lanfranc, his father's wise counsellor, died in 1089, the king left the see of Canterbury unfilled for nearly four years, and embezzled its revenues. But, being stricken with illness in 1093, he had a moment of compunction, and filled up the archbishopric by appointing Anselm, Abbot of Bec. Anselm, like his predecessor Lanfranc, was a learned and pious Italian monk, who had governed his Norman abbey so well that he won the respect of all his neighbours. He was only persuaded with difficulty to accept the position of head of the English Church. "Will you couple me, a poor weak old sheep, to that fierce young bull the King of England?" he asked, when the bishops came to offer him the primacy. But

they forced the pastoral staff into his hands, and hurried him off to be installed. When William recovered from his sickness he began to ask large sums of money from Anselm, in return for the piece of preferment that he had received. The king called this exacting his feudal dues, but the archbishop called it *simony*, the ancient crime of Simon Magus, who offered gold to the apostles to buy spiritual privileges. He sent £500, but when the king asked for more, utterly refused to comply. From this time forth there was constant strife between William and Anselm, the first beginning of that intermittent war between the crown and the Church which was to last for more than two centuries. The archbishop was always withstanding the king. When two popes disputed the tiara at Rome, William refused to acknowledge either ; but Anselm would not allow that there was any doubt, did homage to Urban, and thus forced the king's hand by committing England to one side in the dispute. When Urban sent over to Anselm the *pall*,* the sign of his metropolitan jurisdiction over the island, the king wished to deliver it to the archbishop with his own hands. But Anselm vowed that this was receiving spiritual things from a secular master, and would not take it save with his own hands and from the high altar of Canterbury Cathedral. Nor did he cease denouncing the ill living of the king and his courtiers, till William grew so wrath that he would have slain him, had not all England revered the fearless archbishop as a saint. At last he found a way of molesting Anselm under form of law : he declared that the lands of the see of Canterbury had not sent an adequate feudal contingent to his Welsh wars, and imposed enormous fines on the archbishop for a breach of his duties as a tenant-in-chief of the crown. Soon afterwards Anselm left the realm, abandoning the king to his own devices as incorrigible, and took his way to Pope Urban at Rome ; nor did he return till William was dead.

The end of the Red King was sudden and tragic. He was hunting in the New Forest—the great tract in Hampshire which his father had cleared of its inhabitants and turned into one vast deer-park—and he had chanced to draw apart from all his followers save Walter Tyrrel,

Death of William II.

* A narrow tippet of white wool, fastened by four black cross-headed pins, such as we see in the shield of arms of the see of Canterbury.

one of his chief favourites. A great hart came bounding between them. The king loosed an arrow at it, and missed; "Shoot, Walter, shoot in the devil's name!" he cried. Tyrrel shot in haste, but missed the stag and pierced his master to the heart. Leaving William dead on the ground, he galloped off to the shore and took ship for the continent. William's corpse lay lost in the wood till a charcoal-burner came upon it next day, and bore it in his cart to Winchester. Such was the strange funeral procession of the lord of England and Normandy. William's death grieved none save his favourites and boon companions, for his manner of living was hateful to all good men, and his taxes and extortions had turned from him the hearts of all his subjects (August 2, 1100).

When the throne of England was thus suddenly left vacant, it remained to be seen who would become William's successor.

Election of Henry I.—His charter.

His elder brother Robert, whom the baronage would have preferred, because of his slackness and easy ways, was still far away, on his return journey from the Crusade. But Henry, his younger brother, was on the spot, and knew how to take advantage of the opportunity. Hastily assembling the few members of the Great Council who were near at hand, he prevailed upon them by bribes or promises to elect him king, and was proclaimed at Winchester only three days after William's death, and long before the news that the throne was vacant had reached the turbulent barons of the North and West. After his proclamation at Winchester, Henry moved to London, and there was crowned. He did his best to win the good opinion of all his subjects by issuing a charter of promises to the nation, wherein he bound himself to abide by "the laws of Edward the Confessor," that is, the ancient customs of England, and not to ask of any man more than his due share of taxation—agreeing to abandon the arbitrary and illegal fines on succession to heritages which William II. had always exacted. He then proceeded to fill up all the abbeys and bishoprics which William had kept vacant for his own profit, to recall Anselm from his exile, and to cast into prison Ralf Flambard,* the chief instrument of his brother's oppression and extortions.

* William had made Ralf Bishop of Durham in reward for his evil doing—a typical instance of his cynical disregard for public and private morality.

Henry's conciliatory measures were not taken a moment too soon. He had but just time to announce his good intentions, and to give some earnest of his desire to carry them out, when he found himself involved in a desperate civil war. The barons had broken loose, headed by Robert of Belesme, the turbulent Earl of Shrewsbury, and they were set on making Duke Robert King of England. Robert, indeed, had just returned from Palestine, and had retaken possession of his duchy shortly after his brother's death. He planned an invasion of England to assist his partisans, and began to collect an army.

War with the baronage.

But the new king was too much for his shiftless brother. When Robert landed at Portsmouth, he bought him off for a moment by offering him a tribute of £3000, an irresistible bribe to the impecunious duke, and then used his opportunity to crush the rebellious barons. The fate of the rising was settled by the next summer. Gathering together the English shire levies and those of the baronage who were faithful to him, the king marched against Robert of Belesme and his associates. The successful sieges of Arundel and Bridgenorth decided the war: Robert was forced to surrender, and granted his life on condition of forfeiting his estates and leaving the realm. "Rejoice, King Henry, for now may you truly say that you are lord of England," cried the English levies to their monarch, "since you have put down Robert of Belesme, and driven him out of the bounds of your kingdom" (1101).

So Henry retained the crown that he had seized, and set to work to strengthen his position in the land. He did his best to conciliate the native English by marrying, five months after his accession, a princess of the old royal house of King Alfred. The lady was Eadgyth, or Matilda as the Normans re-named her, the daughter of Malcolm, the King of Scotland and of Margaret the sister of Eadgar the Etheling. So the issue of King Henry, and all his descendants who sat on the English throne, had the blood of the ancient kings of Wessex in their veins. Some of the Normans mocked at this marriage, and at the anxiety which Henry showed to please his native-born subjects, and nicknamed him "Godric," an English name which sounded uncouth to their own ears. But the king heeded not, when he got so much solid

Marriage of Henry to Matilda of Scotland.

advantage from his conduct, and the prosperity of his reign justified his wisdom.

Henry showed himself his father's true son, reproducing the good as well as the evil qualities of the Conqueror. He had the advantage over his father of having been born in England, and of living in a generation when the first bitterness of the strife of races was beginning to be assuaged. If he was selfish and hard-hearted and often cruel, yet he dispensed even-handed justice, curbed all oppressors, and kept to the letter of the law. He made so little difference between Norman and Englishman that the two races soon began to melt together: intermarriage between them became common in all classes save the highest nobility; the English thegns and yeomen began to christen their children by Norman names, while the Anglo-Normans began to learn English, and to draw apart from their kindred beyond the sea in the old duchy. Thirty years after Henry's death, it was remarked by a contemporary writer that no man could say that he was either Norman or English, so much had the two races become intermingled. Much of the benefit of this happy union must be laid to the credit of Henry himself, who both set the example of wedding a wife of English blood, and treated all his men of either race as equal before his eyes. Nor was he averse to granting a larger measure of liberty to his subjects: his charter to the city of London, issued in 1100, was a very liberal grant of self-government to the burghers of his capital, and served as a model ever after to his successors when they gave privileges to their town-dwelling liegemen. He allowed the Londoners to raise their own taxes, to choose their own sheriffs, and to make bye-laws for their municipal government.

Fusion of English and Norman races.

But Henry's character had a bad side: he was at times as ruthlessly cruel as his father; he punished not only rebellion, but theft and offences against the forest laws, by death, or blinding, or mutilation. Once, when he found that the workmen of his mints had conspired together to issue base coins, he struck off the right hand of every moneyer in England. We shall see that he was capable of holding his own brother in close prison for thirty years. He was as grasping and avaricious as his predecessor William, though he was

Character of Henry.

much less arbitrary and harsh in his exactions. His private life, though not a patent scandal like that of the Red King, was open to grave reproach. Above all things he was selfish ; his own advantage was his aim, and if he governed the land wisely and justly, it was mainly because he thought that wisdom and justice were the best policy for himself.

Henry's long reign (1099–1135) was more noteworthy for the tendencies which were at work in it, than for the particular events which mark its individual years. It is mainly important as the time of the silent growth together of Norman and English, and the stereotyping of the constitution on a strong monarchical basis. In his day the king was everything, and the Great Council of tenants-in-chief was no check on him, and did little more than register his decrees. If his successors had all been like himself, England might have become a pure despotism, though one well ordered and—considering the lights of the times—not oppressively administered.

Strength of the monarchy.—

The strife between the monarchy and the Church, which had first taken shape in the quarrel of William Rufus and Anselm, continued in Henry's time, but raged on a new point of issue. When the archbishop returned from exile, he refused to take the usual oath of homage, and to be reinvested in his see by the new king, alleging that, as a spiritual person, he owed fealty to God alone, and received all his power and authority from God, and not from the king. This new and strange doctrine he had picked up in Rome during his exile : the papacy was at this time putting forth those monstrous claims to dominion over kings and princes with which it had been inspired a few years before by the imperious Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII.). Henry could only reply that, though the archbishop was a spiritual person, he was also a great tenant-in-chief, holding vast estates, and that for them he must do homage to the crown, like all other feudal landowners. Anselm refused, and there the matter stood still, for neither would yield, though they treated each other courteously enough, and did not indulge in the angry recrimination which had been wont to take place when Rufus was in Henry's place. Anselm even went into exile again for a space. But at last he and the king met at Bec, in Normandy, in 1106, and hit on a wise compromise,

Fresh disputes with the Church.

which they agreed to apply both to Anselm's case and to all future investitures of bishops. The newly elected prelate was to do homage, as a feudal tenant, for the estates of his see; but he was not to receive the symbols of his spiritual authority from the king, but was to take up his ring and crozier from the high altar of his cathedral, as direct gifts from God. This decision served as a model for the agreement between the Pope and the empire, when fourteen years later the "Contest about Investiture," as this widespread dispute was called, was brought to an end on the continent.

Wars with Duke Robert.—Partial conquest of Normandy.

The chief incidents in the foreign relations of Henry's reign are his long wars with his shiftless brother Robert, and afterwards with Robert's son, William Clito. He had never forgiven the duke for his attempt to dethrone him by the aid of rebels in 1099; nor did the duke ever forgive him for having so promptly seized England at the moment of the death of William II. The peace which they had made in 1100 did not endure, and a long series of hostilities at last culminated in the battle of Tinchebrai (1106). Here Henry, who had invaded Normandy, completely defeated his brother and took him prisoner. He sent the unfortunate Robert to strict confinement in Cardiff Castle, and kept him there all the days of his life. For the rest of his reign Henry ruled Normandy as well as England, but his dominion in the duchy was very precarious. The baronage hated his strong hand and his strict enforcement of the law. They often rebelled against him, but he never failed to subdue them. When William, surnamed Clito, the son of the imprisoned duke, grew towards man's estate, he had no difficulty in finding partisans in Normandy who would do their best to win him back his father's heritage. Aided by the King of France, who was one of Henry's most consistent enemies, William Clito made several bold attempts to deprive his uncle of Normandy. He did not succeed, but presently he became Count of Flanders, to which he had a claim through his grandmother Matilda, the wife of William the Conqueror. Possessed of this rich country, he grew to be a more serious danger to the English king, but he fell in battle in 1128, while striving with some Flemish rebels, and by his death Henry's position became unassailable.

The King of England was troubled with many other enemies beside William Clito. Lewis VI. of France, and Fulk, Count of Anjou, were always molesting him. But he gained or lost little by his long and dreary border wars with them. The one noteworthy consequence of this strife was that, to confirm a peace with Count Fulk, the king married his two children to the son and daughter of the lord of Anjou. First, his son William was wedded to the count's daughter (1119), and some years later the Lady Matilda was married to Geoffrey, the count's son and heir (1127).

Marriage of Princess Matilda to Geoffrey of Anjou.

The importance of this latter marriage lay in the fact that Prince William had died in the intervening space, and that Matilda—a widowed princess whose first husband had been the Emperor Henry V.—was now the King of England's sole heiress. The end of her brother had been strange and tragic: he was following his father from Normandy to England, when a drunken skipper ran his vessel upon the reef of Catteville, only five miles from the Norman shore. The prince was hurried by his followers into the only boat that the ship possessed, and might have escaped, had he not seen that his half-sister, the Countess of Perche,* had been left behind. He bade the oarsmen put back, but when they reached the ship, a crowd of panic-stricken passengers sprang down into the boat and swamped it. The prince was drowned, and with him his half-brother Richard, his half-sister the Countess of Perche, the Earl of Chester, and many of the chief persons of the realm. Only one sailor-lad survived to tell the sad tale of the White Ship. When the news of the death of his only legitimate son reached the king, he was prostrated by it for many days, and it was said that he was never seen to smile again, though he lived for fifteen years after the disaster. But, if the chronicles speak true, the death of William was more of a loss to his father than to the realm, for they report him to have been a proud and cruel youth, who bid fair to reproduce some of the evil qualities of his uncle William Rufus.

Death of Henry's son.—Matilda heiress to the throne.

Henry was determined that his realm should pass at his

* This lady was a natural daughter of the king, and not his legitimate issue by Queen Matilda.

death to his daughter Matilda, and not to any of his nephews, the sons of William the Conqueror's daughters. But he knew that it would be a hard matter to secure her succession, for England had never been ruled by a queen-regnant, and it was very doubtful if the Great Council would elect a woman. Moreover, the barons grudged that she should have been married to a foreign count, for they had hoped that the king would have given her hand to one of his own earls. Henry endeavoured to support Matilda's cause by constraining all the chief men of the realm, and his own kinsfolk, to take an oath to choose her as queen after his death. But he well knew that oaths sworn under compulsion are lightly esteemed, and must have foreseen that on his death his daughter would have great difficulty in asserting her claims.

But, trusting his daughter's fate to the future, Henry persevered in his life's work, and left his kingdom behind him at his death in 1135 with a full treasury, an obedient baronage, and largely extended borders. Not only had he won Normandy, but he had completed the conquest of South Wales, and established large colonies of English and Flemings about Pembroke and in the peninsula of Gower. With his three brothers-in-law, who reigned in Scotland one after another, he dwelt on friendly terms; they did him homage, and he left them unmolested. They were wise princes who knew the value of peace, and under them the Scotch kingdom advanced in civilization and wealth, and grew more and more assimilated to its great southern neighbour.

Complete conquest of South Wales.—Scotland.

On the 1st of December, 1135, King Henry died. Though a selfish and unscrupulous man, he had been a good king, and the troubles which followed his death soon taught the English how much they had owed to his strong and ruthless hand.

Immediately on the arrival of the news of his death, the Great Council met at London. It was soon evident that many of its members thought little of the oath that they had sworn ten years before. One after another they declared that the reign of a queen would be unprecedented and intolerable, and that a man must be chosen to rule over England. Of the male members of the royal house the one who was best known in England was Stephen of Blois, one of the late king's

Stephen elected king.

nephews, and the son of Adela, a daughter of William I., who had wedded the Count of Blois and Champagne. He had been the late king's favourite kinsman, and had taken the oath to uphold Matilda's rights before any of the lay members of the council. Now he lightly forgot his vow, and stood forward as a candidate for the crown. Matilda was absent abroad, and her husband Geoffrey of Anjou was much disliked, so that it was not difficult for Henry, Bishop of Winchester, Stephen's younger brother, to prevail on the majority of the magnates of the realm to reject her claim. In spite of the murmurings of a large minority, Stephen was chosen as king, and duly crowned at London, whose citizens liked him well, and hailed his accession with shouts of joy.

They were soon to change their tone, for ere long Stephen began to show that he was too weak for the task that he had undertaken. He was a good-natured, impulsive, volatile man, who could never refuse a friend's request, or keep an unspent penny in his purse. Save personal courage, he had not one of the qualities of a successful king. The baronage soon took the measure of Stephen's abilities, and saw that the time had come for them to make a bold strike for that anarchical feudal independence which was their dream. The name and cause of Matilda gave them an excellent excuse for throwing up their allegiance, and doing every man that which was right in his own eyes. The king put down a few spasmodic rebellions, but more kept breaking out, till in the third year of his reign a general explosion took place (1138). The cause of the Lady Matilda was taken up by two honest partisans, her uncle David, King of Scotland, and her half-brother Robert, Earl of Gloucester ; * but these two were aided by a host of turbulent self-seeking barons, who craved nothing save an excuse for defying the king and plundering their neighbours.

Aims of the baronage.—Civil war begins.

The Scot was the first to move ; he crossed the Tweed with a great army, giving out that he came to make King Stephen grant him justice in the matter of the counties of Huntingdon and Northampton, which he claimed as the heir of the long-dead Earl Waltheof.†

The Scottish invasion.—Battle of the Standard.

* One of the late king's illegitimate sons, to whom he had given the earldom of Gloucester.

† See p. 77.

But the wild Highland clans that followed David ravaged Northumbria so cruelly that the barons and yeomen of Yorkshire turned out in great wrath to strike a blow for King Stephen. At Northallerton they barred the way of the invaders, mustering under Thurstan, Archbishop of York, and the two sheriffs of the county. They placed in their midst a car bearing the consecrated standards of the three Yorkshire saints—St. Peter of York, St. Wilfred of Ripon, and St. John of Beverley. Around it they stood in serried ranks, and beat off again and again the wild charges of the Highlanders and Galloway men who formed the bulk of King David's army. More than 10,000 Scots fell, and Yorkshire was saved; but the war was only just beginning (1138).

A few months after the Battle of the Standard the English partisans of Matilda took arms, headed by her brother, Earl Robert. Gloucester, Bristol, Hereford, Exeter, and most of the south-west of England at once fell into their hands. Stephen did his best to make head against them, by the aid of such of the baronage as adhered to him, and of great bodies of plundering mercenaries raised in Flanders and France. He bought off the opposition of the Scots by ceding Northumberland and Cumberland to Henry, the son of King David, who was to hold them as his vassal, and for the rest of Stephen's reign the two northern counties were in Scottish hands.

But at this critical moment the king ruined his own cause by a quarrel with the Church. He threw into prison the Bishops of Salisbury and Lincoln, because they refused to surrender their castles into his keeping, and treated them so roughly that every ecclesiastic in the realm—even including his own brother, Henry, Bishop of Winchester—took part against him (1139). Soon afterward Matilda landed in Sussex, and all the southern counties fell away to her. After much irregular fighting, the two parties came to a pitched battle at Lincoln. In spite of the feats of personal bravery which Stephen displayed, he was utterly defeated, and fell into the hands of his enemies (1141).

Victory of Matilda at Lincoln.

The cause of Matilda now seemed triumphant. She had captured her enemy, and most of the realm fell into her hands. She was saluted as "Lady of England" at Winchester, and there received the homage of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and most of the barons and bishops of the land. She then moved to

London, to be crowned ; but in the short space since her triumph she had shown herself so haughty, impracticable, and vindictive that men's minds were already turning against her. Most especially did she provoke Stephen's old partisans, by refusing to release him on his undertaking to quit the kingdom and formally resign his claims to the crown. This refusal led to the continuation of the war : Maud of Boulogne, Stephen's wife, rallied the wrecks of his party and continued to make resistance, and on the news of her approach the Londoners commenced to stir. Their new mistress had celebrated her advent by imposing a crushing *tallage*, or money-fine, on the city, and in wrath at her extortion the citizens rose in arms and chased her out of the place, before she had even been crowned.

The unhappy civil war—which for a moment had seemed at an end—now commenced again. Matilda steadily lost ground, and had to release Stephen in exchange for her brother, Robert of Gloucester, who had fallen into the hands of the king's party. She was besieged first at Winchester, then at Oxford, and on each occasion escaped with great difficulty from her adversaries. At Oxford she had to be let down by a rope at night from the castle keep, to thread her way through the hostile outposts, and then to walk on foot many miles over the snow.

Reverses of Matilda.—Feudal anarchy.

The baronage were so well content with the practical independence which they enjoyed during the civil war, that they had no desire to see it end. They changed from side to side with the most indecent shamelessness, only taking care that at each change they got a full price for their treachery. Geoffrey de Mandeville, the wicked Earl of Essex, was perhaps the worst of them ; he sold each party in turn, and finally fought for his own hand, taking no heed of king or queen, and only seeking to plunder his neighbours and annex their lands. He had many imitators ; the last pages of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which finally comes to an end in Stephen's reign, are filled with a picture of the hopeless misery of the land. Every shire, it laments, was full of castles, and every castle was filled with devils and evil men. The lords took any weaker neighbours who were thought to have money, and put them in dungeons, and tortured them with unutterable devices. "The ancient martyrs were not so ill treated, for they hanged men by the thumbs, or by the head, and smoked

them with foul smoke; they put knotted strings about their heads, and twisted them till they bit into the brain. They put them in dungeons with adders and toads, or shut them into close boxes filled with sharp stones, and pressed them there till their bones were broken. Many thousands they killed with hunger and torment, and that lasted the nineteen winters while Stephen was king. In those days, if three or four men came riding towards a township, all the township fled hastily before them, believing them to be robbers."

So fared England for many years, till in 1153 a peace was patched up at Wallingford. Matilda had quitted England long before, and her party was now led by her young son, Henry of Anjou, who had come over in 1152 to take her place. Stephen was now old and broken by constant campaigning; he had lately lost his son Eustace, whom he had destined to succeed him; and when it was proposed to him that he should hold the crown for his own life, but make Count Henry his heir, he closed with the offer. Less than a year later he died, leaving England in the worst plight that ever she knew since the days of Aethelred the Ill-counselled. For the king's mandate no longer ran over the land, and every baron was ruling for himself. Northumberland and Cumberland were in the hands of the Scots, the Welsh were harrying the border counties, and Yorkshire had been ravaged in 1153 by the last Viking raid recorded in English history. It was time that a strong man should pick up the broken sceptre of William the Conqueror.

Treaty of Wallingford.—Death of Stephen.

CHAPTER VIII.

HENRY II.

1154–1189.

WHEN Henry of Anjou, now a young man of twenty-one years, succeeded to Stephen's crown, he found the country in a most deplorable condition. The regular administration of justice had ceased, many of the counties had no sheriffs or other royal officers, the revenue had fallen off by a half, and the barons were exercising all the prerogatives of the king, even to the extent of coining money in their own names. A weak man would have found the position hopeless; a strong man, like Henry, saw that it required instant and unflinching energy, but that it was not beyond repair.

Undisputed accession of Henry.—His continental dominions.

Henry started with the advantage of an undisputed title; his mother, Matilda, had ceded all her rights to him, and Stephen's surviving son, William of Boulogne, never attempted to lay any claim to the crown. Moreover, the king had enormous resources from abroad to aid him. His father was long dead, so that he was himself Count of Anjou and Touraine. He had his mother's lands of Normandy and Maine already in his hands. But he had become the ruler of a still larger realm by his marriage. He had taken to wife Eleanor, the Duchess of Aquitaine, whose enormous inheritance stretched from the Loire to the Pyrenees. This was a marriage of pure policy; Eleanor was an ill-conditioned, unprincipled woman, the divorced wife of King Lewis VII. of France, and she gave her second husband almost as much trouble as she had given her first. But by aid of her possessions Henry dominated the whole of France; indeed, he held much more French territory under him than did King Lewis VII.

himself, and for the political gain he was prepared to endure the domestic trouble.

The continental dominions of Henry were, indeed, so large that they quite outweighed England in his estimation. He was himself Angevin born and bred, and looked upon his position more as that of a French prince who owned a great dependency beyond sea, than as that of an English king who had possessions



in France. He spent the greater part of his time on the continent, so that England was generally governed by the successive *Justiciars*, or prime ministers, who acted as regents while he was abroad. Henry's absence and his absorption in foreign politics were perhaps not a very grave misfortune for England; he was such a strong and able ruler, that when he had once put the realm to rights in the early part of his reign, the danger to be feared was no longer feudal anarchy, but royal despotism.

Henry's first measures, on succeeding to the throne, were very drastic. He began by ordering the barons to dismantle all the castles which had been built in the troublous times of Stephen, and enforced his command by appearing at the head

of a large army. It is said that he levelled to the ground as many as 375 of these "adulterine castles," as they were called, because they had been erected without the king's leave. Very few of the barons ventured to resist; those who did were crushed without difficulty. Henry also resumed all the royal estates and revenues which Stephen and Matilda had lavished on their partisans during the civil war, annulling all his mother's unwise grants as well as those of her enemy. He filled up the vacant sheriffdoms, and commenced the despatch of itinerant justices round the country, to sit and decide cases in the shire courts; this custom, which became permanent, was the origin of our modern Assizes. After he had set England in order, Henry demanded the restoration of Northumberland and Cumberland from Malcolm of Scotland, the heir of King David. They were given back, after being seventeen years in Scottish hands. At the same time, Malcolm did homage to Henry for his remaining earldom in England, that of Huntingdon, which had descended to him from Waltheof. Owen, Prince of North Wales, submitted himself to the king in the same year, but not without some fighting, in which Henry met with checks at first.

Feudal anarchy put down.—Northumberland and Cumberland recovered.

Thus England was pacified, brought under firm and regular rule, and restored to her ancient frontiers. Henry even thought at this time of invading Ireland, and got a Bull from Pope Adrian IV., the only Englishman who ever sat upon the papal throne, to authorize him to subdue that country. The pretexts alleged were, that the Irish church was schismatic, inasmuch as it refused to acknowledge the papal authority, and also that Ireland was infamous for its slave-trading in Christian men. But no attempt was made to enforce the Bull *Laudabiliter* for many years to come.

Ireland might rest secure, because the king had turned aside into schemes for the augmentation of his continental dominions. Long and fruitless bickerings and negotiations with Lewis VII., the shifty King of France, ended in 1159 in the *War of Toulouse*. Henry laid claim to the great south-French county of Toulouse, as owing fealty to his wife's duchy of Aquitaine. He led against it the greatest army that had been seen for many years, in which the King of Scotland and the Prince of Wales served as his chief vassals.

The War of Toulouse.—Scutage.

But when Lewis of France threw himself into Toulouse, Henry turned aside, moved, it is said, by the curious feudal scruple that it did not befit him as Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou to make a personal attack on his suzerain, the King of France. He ravaged the county, but did not proceed with the siege of Toulouse itself. Next year he patched up a peace with his feudal superior, which was to be confirmed by the marriage of his five-year-old son and heir, Prince Henry, with Margaret, the French king's daughter (1160). The chief interest of the very fruitless war of Toulouse was that Henry employed in it a new scheme of taxation, which was an indirect blow at the feudal system. As Toulouse was so very far from England, he allowed those of the English knighthood who preferred to stay at home, to pay him instead of personal service a composition called *scutage* (shield-money). The money thus received was used to hire a great body of mercenary men-at-arms, whom the king knew to be both more obedient and more efficient soldiers than the unruly feudal levies.

Quarrel with the Church.—Thomas Becket.

The interest of Henry's reign now shifts round to another point—the question of the relations between State and Church, which we have already seen cropping up in the reigns of Rufus and Henry I. In 1162 he appointed Thomas Becket Archbishop of Canterbury, and rued the choice ever after, for now his troubles began. Thomas, the son of a wealthy merchant of London, had been the king's chief secretary or *Chancellor* for the last eight years. He was a clever, versatile, not very scrupulous man, with a devouring ambition : hitherto he had been a devoted servant, and a genial companion to the king, and had lived much more like a layman than a cleric. In spite of his priesthood, he had borne arms in the war of Toulouse, and even distinguished himself in a single combat with a French champion. Henry thought that Thomas would be no less obliging and useful as archbishop than he had been as Chancellor. He was woefully deceived. No sooner was Thomas consecrated, than his whole conduct and manner of life suddenly changed. His ambition—now that he had become a great prelate—was to win the reputation of a saint. Casting away all his old habits, he began to practise the most rigid austerity, wearing a hair shirt next his skin, stinting himself in food and drink, and washing the feet of lepers and

mendicants; from a supple courtier he had become the most angular and impracticable of saints. But it was not merely to mortify his own body that Becket had accepted the archbishopric; his real object was to claim for the head of the Church in England what the Popes of his day were claiming for themselves in Western Christendom—complete freedom from the control of the State. His dream was to make the English Church *imperium in imperio*, and to rule it himself as an absolute master. Without the reputation of a saint, he could not dare to compass this monstrous end, so a saint he had to become. The moment that he was consecrated, he opened his campaign against the king; he threw up the Chancellorship, which Henry had asked him to retain, and commenced at once to "vindicate the rights of the see of Canterbury," that is, to lay claim to a number of estates now in the hands of various lay owners, as being Church land. When his demands were withstood, he in some cases went to law with the owners, but in others used the arbitrary clerical punishment of excommunicating his adversaries. But this was only the beginning of troubles; in 1163 he began to oppose the king in the Great Council, taking up the ever-popular cry that the taxes were over-heavy. Henry, surprised at meeting opposition from such an unexpected quarter, withdrew his proposals, which seem indeed to have been intended rather to limit the profits of the sheriffs than to raise more money.

But the growing estrangement between the king and the archbishop did not come to a full head till the end of 1163, when they engaged in a desperate quarrel on the question of the rights and immunities of the clergy. We have mentioned in an earlier chapter how William the Conqueror had established separate courts for the trial of clerical offences, and had put them under the control of the bishops. Since his day, these courts had been steadily growing in importance, and putting forth wider and wider claims of jurisdiction. The anarchical reign of Stephen, when all lay courts of justice came to a standstill, had been especially favourable to their growth. The last development of their demands had been the extraordinary assertion that they ought to try, not only all ecclesiastical offences, but all offences in which ecclesiastics were concerned. That is, not only were such

Claims of the Ecclesiastical Courts.

crimes as bigamy or heresy or perjury to come before them, but if a member of the clerical body committed theft or assault or murder, or, again, if a layman robbed or assaulted or murdered a cleric, the cases were to be taken out of the king's court, and to be brought before the bishop's. The most monstrous absurdity of this claim was that the ecclesiastical tribunal had no power to impose any but ecclesiastical punishments, that is to say, penance, excommunication, or deprivation of orders. So if a clergyman committed the most grievous crimes, he could not receive any greater penalty than suspension from his clerical duties, or penances which he might or might not perform. It had come to be a regular trick with habitual criminals to claim that they were in holy orders—which included not only the priesthood, but sacristans and sub-deacons and other minor church officers—and so to exchange death or blinding for the milder ecclesiastical punishments.

A very bad case of murder by a priest, which Becket punished merely by ordering the murderer to abstain from celebrating the Sacraments for two years, called King Henry's attention to the usurpation of the Church courts. When he found that their claims were quite modern, and had been unknown to the old English law, he resolved at once to take in hand the settlement of the whole question of the ecclesiastical courts. At a Great Council held at Westminster, he proposed to appoint a committee to investigate the matter, and to draw up a statement of the true law of the land with regard, not only to "criminous clerks," but to all the disputes between lay and clerical personages which could arise. Becket opposed the proposal as an invasion of the rights of the Church, and by his advice the other bishops, when asked if they would undertake to abide by the decision of the committee, replied that they would do so in so far as it did not impugn their rights—which meant not at all.

The Constitutions of Clarendon.

The statement of the laws of England was prepared by the committee, drawn up by the Justiciar, Richard de Lucy, and laid before the Great Council at Clarendon* early in the next year (1164), whence the document is known as the *Constitutions of Clarendon.* The king in it proposed a compromise—that the Church court should try whether a "criminous clerk" was

* A royal manor near Salisbury.

guilty or innocent, and, if it pronounced him guilty, should hand him over to the king's officers to suffer the same punishment that a layman who had committed a similar offence would suffer. In other matters, where a layman and a cleric went to law on secular matters, the case was to be tried in the king's court. No layman was to be punished for spiritual offences, or excommunicated, without the king's leave, and the clergy were strictly prohibited from making appeals to Rome, or going thither, unless they had the royal authorization.

Becket declared that the Constitutions of Clarendon violated the immunities of the Church, but for a moment he yielded and consented to sign them. Next day, however, to the surprise of all men, he asserted that his consent had been a deadly sin, that he withdrew it, and that nothing should induce him to sign the constitutions. Henry vehemently urged him to do so, and pointed out that the Archbishop of York and the rest of the bishops were ready to accept the arrangement as just and fair. But Thomas took the attitude of a martyr, refused to move, and even sent to the Pope to get absolution for his so-called sin in giving a momentary consent to the king's proposals.

Opposition of Becket.

Seriously angry at the archbishop for binding up his cause with that of the criminous clerks and the usurpation of the Church courts, Henry took the rather unworthy step of endeavouring to bend Thomas to his will by allowing several of his courtiers to bring law-suits against him, and by threatening to rake up and go through the accounts of all the public monies that had passed through his hands during the eight years that he had been Chancellor. But Becket was not a man to be bullied; he made himself yet more stiff-necked, and assumed the pose of a martyr for the rights of the Church. It was in vain that the other bishops urged him to yield; he attended the Great Council at Northampton in October, 1164, faced the king, refused to submit, and then, pretending that his life was in danger, fled by night and sailed over to Flanders. For the next six years Becket was on the continent, generally under the protection of Henry's suzerain and enemy, the King of France. He was regarded by the continental clergy as the champion of the rights of their order, and treated with the highest respect wherever he

He leaves England.

went. He did his best to stir up the King of France and his vassals against Henry II., and to induce the Pope Alexander III. to excommunicate him. But Alexander, deep in a quarrel with the great emperor Frederic Barbarossa, did not wish to make an enemy of the strongest king in Western Europe, and refused to do Becket's behest. On his own account, however, the exiled archbishop laid the sentence of excommunication on most of Henry's chief counsellors. As the great body of the bishops sided with the king, Becket's fulminations from over sea had little effect. In England he was treated as non-existent.

An interdict threatened.—Return of Becket.

But in 1170 a new complication brought about a change in affairs. King Henry's eldest son and namesake, Henry the younger, was now a lad of fifteen, and his father wished to crown him and take him as colleague in his kingdom. The right to crown an English king was undoubtedly one of the prerogatives of the Archbishop of Canterbury. But Henry left Becket out of account, and caused the ceremony to be performed by Roger of York. This invasion of his privileges wrought Thomas to such fury that he sought out the Pope, and won him over by his vehemence to threaten to lay all England under interdict—to cut it off from Christendom, and forbid the celebration of the Sacraments within its bounds.

King Henry, who was engaged in a troublesome war with the French king, was afraid of the consequences of the papal interdict; its enforcement, he thought, would make him too unpopular. So he humbled himself to patching up a truce with Becket, though they could not even yet come to any agreement on the question of the Constitutions of Clarendon. In the autumn of 1170 the king allowed him to return to England, on a tacit agreement that bygones were to be bygones.

But Becket had hidden his true purpose from the king. He returned to England bent, not on peace, but on war. Either because his anger carried him away, or because he was deliberately aiming at martyrdom and wished to provoke his enemies to violence, he proceeded to the most unheard-of measures. He first excommunicated the Archbishop of York and the Bishops of London and Lincoln, who had taken part in the crowning of the younger Henry. Then he laid a similar

sentence on those of the king's courtiers whom he accused of encroaching on the estates of the see of Canterbury.

The king was still over-sea in Normandy when the news of Becket's declaration of war was brought him. Henry was a man of violent passions, and the tale moved him to a sudden outbreak of fury. "Of all the idle servants that I maintain," he cried, "is there not one that will avenge me on this pestilent priest?" The words were wrung from him by the excitement of the moment, and soon forgotten, but they had a disastrous result. Among those who heard them were four reckless knights, some of whom had personal grudges against Becket, and all of whom were ready to win the king's favour by any means, fair or foul. Their names were Reginald Fitzurse, Hugh de Morville, William de Tracy, and Richard the Breton. These four took counsel with each other, secretly stole away from the court, and crossed the stormy December seas to England. They rode straight to Canterbury, sought audience with the archbishop, and bade him remove the excommunication of Roger of York and the rest, or face the king's wrath. Thomas met their words with a fierce refusal; thereupon they withdrew after defying him and warning him that his blood was on his own head. While they were girding on their coats of mail in the cathedral close, the monks of Canterbury besought the archbishop to fly. He had plenty of time to do so, but flight was not his purpose. Far from hiding himself, he called for his robes and his attendants, and went to join in the Vesper service at the cathedral. The knights were soon heard thundering at the door; Becket threw it open with his own hands, and asked their purpose. "Absolve the bishops or die," cried Fitzurse. "Never till they have done penance for their sin," was the reply. Tracy cast his arms about the archbishop and tried to drag him outside the cathedral; but Thomas cast him down. Then Fitzurse drew his sword and cut at Becket's head, and the others felled him with repeated strokes, while he kept crying that he died for the cause of God and the Church. So ended the great archbishop, slain by lawless violence on the consecrated stones of his own cathedral. The splendid courage with which he met his death, and the brutality of his assailants, persuaded most men that he must have been in the right. The clergy looked upon him as their

Murder of Becket.

knight and champion, and were only too ready to make capital out of his troubles and heroic end. The poor remembered his indiscriminate almsgiving, his austerities, his opposition to the Danegelt. Every class of men felt some respect for one who had suffered exile and death for loyal adhesion to a cause, and few, except the king, thoroughly realized that the cause had really been that of ill government and clerical tyranny. Hence it came that a man whose main characteristics were his ambition and his obstinacy, and whose saintliness was artificial and deliberately assumed, took his place in the English calendar as the favourite hero of the Church. The Pope made him a saint in 1174, a magnificent shrine was erected over his remains, and for 350 years pilgrims thronged in thousands to do homage to his bones. To relate how many hysterical persons or impostors gave out that they had been healed of their diseases by a visit to his sanctuary would be tedious. The thing which would have given Becket most pleasure, could he have lived again to view it, was the sight of Henry II. doing penance at his tomb in 1174, and baring his back to be scourged by the monks of Canterbury, as a slight reparation for the hasty words that had brought about his servants' deed of murder.

There is no doubt that Henry was sincerely shocked and horrified by the news of the archbishop's death. He sent instant messages to the Pope to clear himself of the accusation of having been privy to the crime, and offered any satisfaction that Alexander might demand. Meanwhile he undertook what might be considered a kind of crusade to Ireland, with the avowed purpose of reducing it to obedience to the papacy as well as to subjection to himself.

For during the times of Becket's exile (1164–70) two important series of events had been occurring, one of which put Henry in possession of Brittany, while the other had led to his interference in Ireland. The Dukes of Normandy had always claimed a feudal supremacy over Brittany. This claim Henry found an opportunity for asserting and turning to account, by forcing Conan, the Breton duke, to marry his infant heiress Constance to his own third son Geoffrey, a boy of seven years old (1166). When Conan died five years later, Henry ruled the whole duchy as guardian of his young son and daughter-in-law. Thus his

Henry in possession of Brittany.

power was extended over the whole western shore of France from the Somme to the Pyrenees.

Henry's interference in Ireland sprang from more complicated causes. Ireland in the twelfth century was—as it had been since the first dawn of history—a group of Celtic principalities, always engaged in weary tribal wars with each other. Sometimes one king gained a momentary superiority over the rest, but his power ceased with his life. In the ninth century the island had been overrun by the Danes ; they had not succeeded in occupying a broad *Danelagh* such as they won in England, but had built up a number of small kingdoms on the coast, round their fortified strongholds of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, and Limerick. These principalities still existed in Henry's time, while the interior was held by the five kings of Ulster, Munster, Connaught, Meath, and Leinster. At this moment Roderic O'Connor of Connaught claimed and occasionally exercised authority as suzerain over the other kings. But he had no real power over the land, which lay half desolate, had become altogether barbarous, and teemed with cruel and squalid tribal wars. The introduction of this distressful country into English politics may be laid at the door of Dermot McMorrough, King of Leinster. This prince had been driven out of his realm by his suzerain, Roderic, King of Connaught, because he had carried off the wife of Roderic's vassal, O'Rourke, Lord of Breffny. Dermot came to England, and asked aid of Henry II., who, as we have already seen, had long possessed a papal Bull, authorizing the conquest of Ireland.* Henry would not stir himself, being in the midst of troubles with the King of France, but gave the exiled king leave to obtain what help he could from the English barons. Dermot placed himself in the hands of Richard de Clare, nicknamed Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke, a warlike but impecunious peer who had great influence in South Wales. Richard raised a small army of Anglo-Norman knights and Welsh archers—less than 2000 men in all—and landed in Ireland to restore Dermot to his throne. He met with quite unexpected success, sweeping Dermot's enemies out of Leinster, and conquering the Danish princes of Wexford and Dublin. He married Dermot's heiress Eva, and on the king's death in 1171 succeeded him as ruler in

Ireland.—Expedition of Strongbow.

* See p. 99.

his kingdom. Other barons and knights from South Wales came over to join him, and they obtained a complete mastery over the native Irish, whose light-armed bands could not resist the charge of the mail-clad knights or stand before the archers, even when they were in overwhelming numerical superiority. In a battle before the gates of Dublin, a few hundred followers of Strongbow routed the whole host of Roderic of Connaught, though he was supported by a considerable body of Danish Vikings.

Now, Henry did not wish to see one of his vassals building up a great kingdom in Ireland, independent of his authority. So, taking advantage of the papal authorization that he had so long kept by him, he crossed himself in 1171 with a great army and fleet, landed at Waterford, and marched to Dublin. He had no trouble in getting his authority recognized. Not only did Strongbow do him homage for the kingdom of Leinster, but, one after another, most of the native Irish kings came to his court and paid allegiance to him. From henceforth the Kings of England might call themselves "Lords of Ireland," but their power in the island was not very easy to exercise, nor did it extend to the remoter corners of the land. About half the soil of Ireland was seized by English and Norman adventurers, who built themselves castles and held down the Celts around them. The other half, mostly consisting of the more rugged and barren districts, remained in the hands of the native chiefs. But the settlers in the course of time intermarried with the Irish, and adopted many of their customs, so that they became tribal chiefs themselves. A century later the grudge between the settlers and the natives was still bitter, but they had become so closely assimilated that it was hard for a stranger to distinguish them. The one were as turbulent, clannish, fierce, and barbarous as the other. Only on the east coast round Dublin, in the district that was afterwards known as the English 'Pale,' did the Anglo-Irish dwell in a settled and civilized manner of life, and obey the King of England's mandates. The larger part of the island had to be reconquered four centuries after.

Henry invades Ireland in person.

Perhaps the only permanent and immediate result of Henry's visit to Ireland was the submission of the Irish Church to the Pope. In a synod held at Cashel in 1172, all the bishops of the

land acknowledged the papal supremacy, and abandoned the old customs of their Church. Thus the papal yoke was the first and most unhappy gift of England to Ireland.

It was on his return from Dublin that King Henry met the legates of Alexander III. at Avranches, in Normandy, and, on swearing that he had neither planned nor consented to the murder of Becket, was taken into the Pope's favour, and received complete absolution. In return, he promised to go on a crusade, and swore that he would support Alexander against his enemy the Emperor Frederic I. He also consented to annul the Constitutions of Clarendon, but did not make any formal surrender of the principles on which they rested—the right of the State to deal with ecclesiastical persons guilty of secular offences. Thus ended the tragedy of Becket's strife with the king; the archbishop had obtained by his death what he could never win in his life, and the question between Church and State was left open, instead of being settled, as had at first seemed likely, in favour of the king.

Reconciliation with the Pope.

In less than a year after the penance at Avranches, Henry was plunged into a new sea of troubles, in which the Church party saw the vengeance of Heaven for the fate of Becket. All these troubles sprang from the undutiful conduct of Henry's sons, four graceless youths who had been brought up in the worst of schools by their able but unprincipled mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Henry, the eldest son, was now in his nineteenth year; Richard, the second son, in his seventeenth. But, in spite of their youth, the two boys, encouraged and supported by their mother, conspired against their father and king. In 1173 Henry fled to the court of Lewis of France, alleging as his grievance the fact that the king would not grant him a great appanage—England or Normandy—to rule in his own right. With the aid of Louis VII. the young Henry stirred up all the discontented elements in his father's dominions. He arranged for a simultaneous rising of the discontented barons of Brittany, Anjou, and Poitou, for a rebellion in England to be headed by the earls of Leicester, Derby, and Norfolk, and for an invasion of Northumbria by William, the King of the Scots.

Conspiracy of Princes Henry and Richard.

This widespread conspiracy actually came to a head; but its outbreak only served to show King Henry's strength and

activity. He was himself in France when the storm burst: taking in hand the work that lay nearest to him, he put down the Bretons and Angevins, and forced the King of France to conclude a truce. Then in the winter of 1173–4 he turned upon his son Richard's partisans in Poitou, and, after much fighting, pacified the land. Meanwhile the king's representative in England, the Justiciar Richard de Lucy, had called out the levies of the shires against the revolted barons. The campaign was settled by a battle at Fornham, in Suffolk, where the rebels were scattered and the Earl of Leicester taken prisoner. One after another the castles of the disloyal barons fell, and when England was pacified, Ralf de Glanville led a force against the Scots, surprised them at Alnwick, and took their king William the Lion prisoner (1174).

Suppression of the rebels.—Moderation of Henry.

Thus Henry had triumphed over all his foes. In the moment of victory he showed extraordinary moderation. He neither executed any of the rebels nor confiscated their lands, but only insisted that all their castles should be demolished. He gave his sons a full pardon, and restored them to his favour; with their mother he was far more wroth, and never would live with her again. The King of the Scots was only released on doing homage to the English crown, not merely for his earldoms of Huntingdon and Lothian, which had always been reckoned English fiefs, but for his whole kingdom of Scotland (1175).

This was Henry's greatest triumph: the danger of feudal anarchy had once more assailed him, and he had beaten it down with such a firm hand that England was never troubled again with a purely selfish and anarchic baronial rising for more than two centuries. But this victory did not win the king a quiet and glorious end to his reign. His wicked and ungrateful sons were to be the bane of his elder years.

The effect of the blow that he had dealt his disloyal subjects lasted about eight years, a period of quiet and prosperity on both sides of the Channel, during which Henry passed many excellent laws, and more especially dealt with the administration of justice, arranging permanent circuits for the itinerant justices who sat in the county courts to hold the assizes. He also issued regulations for the uniform arming and mustering of the shire-levies, the old English fyrd which had served him so well against the

Prosperity and Legislation.—Itinerant justices.—The fyrd.

rebels in 1173. Abroad he was universally recognized as the greatest king of the West. He was chosen as the fairest arbitrator in several disputes between contemporary princes—even by the distant Kings of Spain. He married his daughters to the Kings of Castile and Sicily and the great Duke of Saxony, the chief vassal of the German crown. To each of his sons he promised a great inheritance: Henry was to have England, Normandy, and Anjou; Richard was to take his mother's portion in Aquitaine; Geoffrey was already provided for with his wife's duchy of Brittany: John, the youngest son, was to be King of Ireland, and the Irish chiefs were made to do homage to him.

All this prosperity lasted till 1183, when Henry was fifty-two, and his four sons respectively twenty-eight, twenty-six, twenty-four, and sixteen. Tired of waiting any longer for his inheritance, and forgetful of the warning that he had received in 1174, Henry the younger once more took arms against his father: his aider and abettor was the new King of France, Philip Augustus, the son of Lewis VII., as bitter an enemy of the Angevin house as his predecessor had been. Henry also persuaded his brother Geoffrey to bring in the Bretons to his aid. Richard and John, the king's second and fourth sons, were for the time being faithful to their father; indeed, the actual *casus belli*, which Henry the younger published as his justification, was that the king had unfairly favoured Richard against him. This time the fighting was all on the continent; the English baronage were too much cowed to stir.

Second rebellion of Henry and Geoffrey.

Henry the younger had only been a few months in rebellion when he died, stricken down by a fever (1183). But the civil war in Aquitaine did not end with his death; it dragged on its path till Geoffrey, his accomplice in the rebellion, was accidentally killed at a tournament three years later (1186). Henry had no issue, but Geoffrey left an infant heir, the unfortunate Arthur of Brittany, whose sad end was to shock the succeeding generation.

Henry's two rebellious sons being dead, peace was for a time restored in his continental dominions. Men's minds were turned away for a time from civil strife by dire news from the East. The Saracens had just routed the Christian King of Palestine, and recaptured Jerusalem. The work of the First Crusade was undone, and the

The Third Crusade.—The Saladin tithe.

Holy Sepulchre and the True Cross had fallen back into the hands of the infidels. The nations of the West were profoundly shocked; King Henry, his eldest surviving son Richard, and his great enemy Philip of France, all swore to take the cross and go forth to save the wrecks of the kingdom of Jerusalem from Saladin, the victorious lord of Syria and Egypt. All their baronage vowed to follow them, and the Great Council of England voted for the support of the new crusade a heavy tax, the "Saladin tithe," as it was called, which was to be a tenth of every man's goods and chattels. This was the first impost levied on personal property, that is, property other than land, which was ever raised in England. Previously, the Danegelt and the other taxes that had been raised, were calculated on landed property alone.

It would have been well for the King of England if his son and his French neighbour had sailed for the Holy Land in the year that they made their vow. For another and crowning grief was about to fall upon Henry. Richard, now his heir, revolted against him, even as Henry the younger and Geoffrey had done four years before. Like his elder brother, Richard alleged that his father would not give him enough; he complained that the king did not allow him to be crowned as his colleague, and that he made too much of John, the youngest and best loved of his four sons. The ungrateful conduct of Richard broke Henry's heart; though only fifty-six years of age, he began visibly to fail in health and mind. He made little endeavour to resist his son, and allowed him to overrun Anjou and Maine unopposed. Instead of calling out all his energies and appealing to the loyalty of his English and Norman subjects, he cast himself upon his couch and gave himself up to passionate grief. Rather than take arms against Richard, he determined to give him all that he asked. So, rising from his bed, he dragged himself to Colombières, where he met Richard and the King of France, and swore to grant all they claimed. It was noticed that his bodily weakness was so great that his servants had to hold him on his horse while the interview was taking place. Two days later he expired; the final death-blow that prostrated him was the discovery of the fact that his youngest son, John, whom he had believed to the last to be faithful to him, had secretly aided

Third rebellion of Richard and John.—Death of Henry II.

Richard and joined in the rebellion. For when he swore to pardon all Richard's accomplices, and was given the list of their names, he found that of John set at the head of the catalogue of traitors. "Let things go as they will; I have nothing to care for in the world now," he said; and, turning his face to the wall, gave up his spirit (July 7, 1189).

So died Henry of Anjou, whom after-ages styled Plantagenet.* He was an Englishman neither by birth nor by breeding, and the greater part of his reign was spent abroad—two years was the longest continuous stay that he ever made on this side of the Channel. But, foreigner as he was, he was the best king that England had known since Eadgar, or that she was to know till Edward I. That he ended the awful anarchy which had prevailed since the accession of Stephen, was a merit that should never be forgotten. When the feudal danger was at its greatest, he boldly faced it, ended private wars, pulled down illegal castles, and reduced the baronage to its due obedience. And when the land was subdued beneath his hand he ruled it justly, not as a grasping tyrant, but as a wise and merciful master. Among the kings of his day he was conspicuous for two rare virtues, a willingness to pardon and forget, and a determination to stand firm by the letter of his promise. He had his faults—a hasty temper, a far-reaching ambition, a tendency to deal with men as if they were merely counters in the great game of politics; nor was his private life entirely free from blame. But he loved order and justice so well, and gave them in such good measure to his subjects, that his virtues must always outweigh in English minds his occasional lapses from the right path.

Character of Henry II.

* From the sprig of broom (*planta genista*) that his father, Geoffrey of Anjou, is said to have worn as a badge.

CHAPTER IX.

RICHARD I. AND JOHN.

1189–1216.

WHEN Henry of Anjou died broken-hearted at Chinon, his eldest surviving son Richard succeeded him in all his vast dominions, save in the duchy of Brittany, which fell to the child Arthur, the son of Richard's brother Geoffrey. John, the late king's youngest-born, received a fit reward for his treachery to his father in losing the appanage that had been destined for him. He did not obtain any independent principality of his own, but Richard made him Earl of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, and Somerset.

From the moment of his accession the new king began to busy himself with preparations for going to the Crusade. He had taken the Cross in 1187, and his penitence for lingering in Europe and troubling his father, when he should have been over-seas fulfilling his vow, seems to have had a real influence upon him. But the mere love of adventure must be allowed to have had a far larger share in turning his steps to the East. Richard had the habits and instincts of a turbulent feudal baron, not those of a king. He had spent his life up to this time in petty wars with his father, his brothers, and his vassals in Aquitaine; such an existence pleased him well, and he dreamed of more exciting warfare on a larger stage in the lands of the Infidel, as the highest ambition that he could conceive.

Preparations for the Crusade. —Sale of lands and offices.

The moment that he had been crowned, Richard set to work to scrape together every penny that he could procure, in order to provide against the expenses of the forthcoming Crusade. He began by selling every office and dignity that was vacant, with a gross disregard for the interests of the crown and the welfare of his subjects.

He took £3000 from William Longchamp, the haughty and quarrelsome Bishop of Ely, and appointed him both Chancellor and Justiciar; that is, he made regent in his absence the most unsuitable man that could have been found. He sold the earldom of Northumberland to Hugh, Bishop of Durham, for £1000. A still greater bargain was obtained by William, King of Scotland, who for the sum of 10,000 marks (£6666) was let off the homage to the crown of England, which Henry II. had imposed upon him after the battle of Alnwick. Richard jestingly said that "he would have sold London itself if he could have found a rich enough buyer." But every town that wanted a charter, every baron who coveted a slice of crown land, every knight who wished to be made a sheriff, obtained the desired object at a cheap rate.

The Jews in England.—Outbreak of persecution.

Richard's reign began with an outburst of turbulence which illustrated his careless governance well enough. Among the many classes of subjects to whom his father had given peace and protection was the Jewish colony in England, a body which had been rapidly growing in numbers as England recovered from its ills under Henry's firm hand. The Jews were much hated by their neighbours, partly as rivals in trade of the native merchant, and as usurers who lent money at exorbitant interest, but most of all because of their race and religion. But they had settled under the king's protection, and in return for the heavy tribute which they paid him, obtained security for their life and goods. They were often called the "king's property," because he kept the right of taxing and managing them entirely in his own hands.

At Richard's coronation a deputation of Jewish elders came to bear him a gift. They were set upon by the king's foreign servants and cruelly beaten, in mere fanatical spite. The news spread, and on a false rumour that the king had approved the deed, the London mob rose and sacked the Jews' quarter. Nor was this all; the excitement spread over all England, and at Norwich, Stamford, Lincoln, York, and other places, there were riots in which many Jews were slain. At the last-named city a fearful tragedy occurred; all the Jews of York took refuge in the castle, and when they were beset by a howling mob who cried for their blood, they by common consent slew their wives and

children, and then set fire to the castle and burnt themselves, rather than fall into the hands of their enemies. No adequate punishment was ever inflicted for these disgraceful riots; even at York only a fine was imposed on the town.

Richard left England in December, 1189, and, after raising additional forces and stores of money in his continental dominions, sailed from Marseilles for the East. Richard was one of three sovereign princes who engaged in the third Crusade; the other two were the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa and Philip Augustus, King of France. The emperor led the troops of Germany by the land route through Constantinople and Asia Minor, but Richard and Philip had wisely resolved to go by sea. Frederic lost three-fourths of his army in forcing his way through the Turkish sultanate in Asia Minor, and was accidentally drowned himself ere he crossed the borders of Syria. Only a small remnant of the German host ever reached the Holy Land. Richard and Philip fared much better, and gained the Levant in safety, after halting in Sicily for the winter of 1190-91. It was during their stay at Messina that the two kings became bitter personal enemies; in his father's time Richard had been the friend of the French, and he did not realize for some time the fact that in succeeding to Henry's dominions he had also succeeded to the jealous hatred which Philip nourished for his over-great vassal, the Duke of Aquitaine and Normandy. But in Sicily Richard detected the French king plotting and intriguing against him, and for the future regarded him as a secret enemy, and viewed all his acts with suspicion.

The third Crusade.—Quarrel of Richard and Philip of France.

If we were relating the personal acts of Richard rather than the history of England, there would be much to tell of his feats in the East. He began by subduing the isle of Cyprus, whose ruler, Isaac Comnenus—a rebel against the Emperor of Constantinople—had ill-treated the shipwrecked crews of some English vessels. After conquering the whole island, he took formal possession of it, and with great pomp married there his affianced bride, Berengaria of Navarre, who had come out from Europe to join him. He then sailed for the Holy Land, and landed near Acre, in the centre of the seat of war.

Richard conquers Cyprus.

Acre was at this moment beset by those of the Crusaders who had arrived before Richard. But their camp was itself being besieged by a great Saracen host under Sultan Saladin, who had raised all the levies of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, to relieve the beleaguered city. The landing of the hosts of England and France soon turned the tide of war, and ere long Acre fell. Richard earned and obtained the whole credit of the success by his energy and courage, while his rival Philip, by his jealous bickering with the English, merited a name for disloyalty and lukewarm zeal. It must be confessed that Richard won himself many enemies by his haughtiness and hasty temper; not only did he quarrel with Philip, but he mortally offended Leopold of Babenberg, the Duke of Austria. The German had planted his banner upon the walls of Acre as if he had taken the town himself, and Richard had it hewn down and cast into the ditch.

Capture of Acre, 1191.

Less than three weeks after Acre fell, the King of France suddenly announced his intention of returning home, though nothing had yet been done to defeat Saladin or recapture Jerusalem. He left part of his army behind him under the Duke of Burgundy, and sailed off, after making a vain promise that he would not molest Richard's dominions so long as he was at the Crusade.

Return of Philip.—Richard fails to reach Jerusalem.

Thus left to himself, Richard led the crusading host southward along the coast, and defeated Saladin at a pitched battle at Arsouf. He forced his way to within a few miles of Jerusalem, but, before attacking it, turned back to secure himself a base on the sea, through which he could get stores and provisions from his ships. He took Ascalon, therefore, and garrisoned it, and afterwards captured many neighbouring forts, and intercepted a great caravan which was bringing arms and stores for Saladin across the desert from Egypt. But when he wished to start again for Jerusalem, dissensions broke out in the crusading camp. The subject of dispute was the succession to the throne of Jerusalem. Richard supported Guy of Lusignan, one of his Poitevin vassals, while the French and the bulk of the other Crusaders wished to elect an Italian prince, Conrad of Montferrat. The quarrel kept the army idle till the hot season of 1092 arrived, and endured till Conrad was slain by a Saracen

fanatic ; then Richard moved forward, but when he had arrived within four hours' march of Jerusalem, the French portion of the army, worn out by thirst and exhaustion, refused to advance any further. Richard was forced to fall back when at the very goal, and refused even to look upon the Holy City. "My eyes shall never behold it, if my arm may not reconquer it," he cried, and, muffling his face in his cloak, he turned back towards the coast.

After defeating the Saracens in another fight near Jaffa, Richard patched up a truce for three years with Saladin, and resolved to return home. It was obvious that with thinned ranks and disloyal allies he could not retake Jerusalem, and he had received such news from England as to the doings of his brother John and his neighbour King Philip, that he was anxious to get home as soon as possible. So he made terms with the sultan, by which Acre and the other places that he had conquered were left to the Christians, and permission was given them to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem without let or hindrance. Then, without waiting for his fleet or his army, he started off in wild haste on a private ship, intending to land at Venice and make his way overland through Germany, for he could not trust himself in France after the news that he had just received (1193).

Richard leaves Palestine.

But more haste proved less speed, in this as in so many other cases. Richard's ship was wrecked in the Adriatic, and he had to land at Ragusa. His path took him through the duchy of Leopold of Austria, whom he had so grievously offended at the siege of Acre. Although he was travelling in disguise, he was recognized at Vienna, and promptly cast into prison by the revengeful duke. After keeping him awhile in chains, Leopold sold him to his suzerain, the Emperor Henry VI. That monarch, being thus placed by chance in possession of the person of a sovereign with whom he was not at war, had the meanness to trump up charges against Richard in order to have some excuse for making him pay a ransom. So he accused his captive of having murdered Conrad of Montferrat, of having unjustly deprived the rebel Isaac of Cyprus of his realm, and of having insulted Leopold the Austrian. He was in prison

Richard imprisoned in Germany.

more than a year, and no one in England knew what had become of him, since he had been travelling disguised and almost alone when he was taken.

Meanwhile, during the three years of Richard's absence England had been much disturbed. William Longchamp, the haughty and tactless bishop whom he had left behind him as Justiciar, made himself so much disliked by his pride, his despotism, and his violence that there was a general rising against him. The king's brother John, the Earl of Cornwall, put himself at the head of the malcontents, and began seizing all the royal castles on which he could lay hands. Longchamp was at last forced to resign his place and fled over-sea, hardly escaping the fury of the people at Dover, where he was caught in the disguise of a huckster-woman and nearly pulled to pieces. His place as Justiciar was taken by Archbishop Walter of Rouen, whom Richard sent home from the Crusade for the purpose. Walter was a prudent and able man, but found a hard task before him, for Earl John was set on making himself a party in England, and aimed at the crown. When the news of Richard's captivity reached London, John openly avowed his intention, and allied himself with Philip of France. That prince had begun to intrigue against the King of England the moment that he got back from the Crusade. He had a claim on the Vexin, a district on the Norman border, which he had once ceded to Henry II. on the understanding that it should be the dowry of a French princess whom Richard was to marry. As the marriage had never taken place, and the English king had chosen another bride, Philip had much show of reason on his side. But he aimed not only at recovering the Vexin, but at winning as much of his absent neighbour's land as he could seize. With this object he offered to support Earl John in his attempt to seize the English throne, in return for some territorial gains. John was ready enough to agree, did homage to him, and gave him up the Vexin and the city of Tours. Meanwhile they both sent secret messages to the Emperor Henry, to beg him to detain Richard in prison as long as possible.

Discontent and intrigues in England.

But Henry thought more of screwing money out of his prisoner than of keeping him for ever in his grasp. He offered to release Richard on receiving the enormous ransom of 150,000

marks (£100,000). It was a huge sum for England to raise, but so anxious was the nation to get back its king, that no hesitation was made in accepting the bargain. Meanwhile John and Philip, knowing that their enemy would soon be loose, were stirred up to hasty action. Philip raised his host and attacked Normandy, but was beaten off with loss from Rouen. John hired mercenary soldiers, gathered his friends, and seized a number of the royal castles in England. But only a small number of discontented barons backed him, and he was held in check by the loyal majority, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Hubert Walter, who put himself at the head of the king's party. Even while this civil war was in progress, the money for Richard's ransom was being raised, by the imposition of a crushing tax of "one-fourth on all movable goods, and twenty shillings on every knight's fee."

Richard's ransom.

In the spring of 1194 the emperor gave Richard his liberty, after receiving the stipulated sum and making his prisoner swear an oath of homage to him for his kingdom of England. But this preposterous vow of allegiance was not taken seriously by Richard or by England, being wrung by force from a helpless captive. On reaching England, the king put himself at the head of the army which was operating against the rebels, and took Nottingham and Tickhill, the two last strongholds which held out. John himself fled over-sea; some months later he was pardoned by his long-suffering brother.

Return of Richard.

Thus Richard was once more a free man, and in full possession of his realm. There was much in the state of England that required the master's eye, but the king was far more set on punishing his neighbour, King Philip, than on attending to the wants of his subjects. After appointing new officials to take charge of the kingdom, and raising great sums of money, he hurried over to Normandy to plunge into hostilities with the French.

England never saw Richard again; indeed, in the whole course of his ten years' reign, he only spent seven months on this side of the channel. His heart was always in France, where he had been bred up, and not in England, though he had been born in the palace of Beaumont, in Oxford, not fifty yards from the spot where these lines are written. The remaining six years of Richard's

War with France.—Taxation and discontent.

reign were entirely occupied in fruitless and weary border wars with the French king. It was a war of sieges and skirmishes, not of great battles. Richard held his own, in spite of the rebellions stirred up by Philip among his vassals in Aquitaine; but he did not succeed in crushing his adversary, as might have been expected from his superior military skill. In England the struggle was only felt through the heavy taxation which the king imposed on the land, to keep up his large mercenary army over-sea. Archbishop Hubert Walter ruled as Justiciar with considerable wisdom and success, and as long as Richard was sent the money that he craved, he left the realm to itself. Hubert's rule was not altogether a quiet one, but the very troubles that arose against him show the growing strength of national feeling and liberty in England. In 1198, the Great Council, headed by Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, refused the king's newest and most exorbitant schemes of taxation, and Hubert could not force them to pay. London in the same year was disturbed by a great democratic rising of the poorer citizens, headed by one William Fitz-Osbert, called Longbeard, who rose in riot to compel the aldermen to readjust the taxes of the city, and the Justiciar had to take arms to put it down. Fitz-Osbert fortified himself in Bow Church, but was wounded, taken, and hung.

Death of Richard.

An obscure and unworthy end was reserved for the restless and reckless son of the great Henry. He heard that Widomar, Viscount of Limoges, one of his vassals in Aquitaine, had found a great treasure-trove of gold, and bade him give it up. The viscount would not surrender all his find, so Richard laid siege to his castle of Chaluz. The place was taken, but while directing the attack the king received a wound from a crossbow bolt in his shoulder. His unskilful surgeons could not cure him, the wound gangrened, and Richard saw that his days were numbered. When the castle fell, Bertrand de Gourdon, the archer who had discharged the fatal bolt, was sought out and brought to his bedside. "What had I done that you should deal thus with me?" asked the king. "You slew my father and my two brothers with your own hands," replied the soldier, "and now I am ready to bear any torture since I know that you have to die." The fierce answer touched a chord to which Richard could respond. He bade his officers

send the man away unharmed, but Mercadet, the chief among his mercenary captains, kept Gourdon in bonds till the king breathed his last, and then flayed him alive (April 6, 1199).

Of all the kings who ever ruled in this land Richard cared least for England, and paid least attention to its needs. But his reign was not therefore one that was harmful to his realm. The yoke of an absent king, even if he be a spendthrift, is not so hard as that of a tyrant who dwells at home, and England has known much worse days than those of the later years of Richard Cœur de Lion. His ministers kept up the traditions of the administration of Henry II., and ruled the land with law and order, duly summoning the Great Council, assessing taxation with its aid, and levying it with as little oppression as they could, through agents selected by the nation. One considerable advance in the direction of liberty was granted by Richard, when he allowed the shire-moots to chose for themselves "*coroners*," officials who were to take charge of the royal prerogatives in the counties in place of the sheriff; they were to investigate such matters as murder, riot, or injury to the king's lands or revenues, and the other offences which were called "the pleas of the crown." Thus an officer chosen by the people was substituted for one chosen by the crown, a great advantage to those who were to come under his hand. The "coroner" still survives in England, but all his duties save that of inquiring into cases of suspicious death have long been stripped from him.

Rule of the Justiciar.— Coroners.

Richard the Lion-hearted left two male kinsmen to dispute about his vast dominions. These were Arthur of Brittany, the son of his next brother Geoffrey, and John of Cornwall, his false and turbulent youngest brother. The English Great Council chose John as king without any hesitation; they would not take Arthur, a mere boy of twelve, who had never been seen in England; they preferred John in spite of his great and obvious faults. But in the continental dominions of Richard there was no such unanimity: the unruly barons of Anjou and Aquitaine thought they would gain through having a powerless boy to reign over them, rather than the unscrupulous and grasping Earl John. If it had not been for the old queen dowager, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who came forward to defend her best-loved son's claims, and to persuade her Gascon vassals to adhere to his cause, John would never

John and Arthur of Brittany.— War in France.

have obtained any hold on the continent. By Eleanor's aid he triumphed for a moment, but baron after baron rose against him, using Arthur's name as his pretence, and civil war never ceased from the moment of John's accession. Philip of France, who now, as always, had his own ends to serve, feigned to espouse the cause of Arthur, and acknowledged him as his uncle's heir alike in Normandy, Anjou, and Aquitaine. Thus the war between France and England, which had dragged on through the reign of Richard, continued in a new form all through the time of John. There was a partial pacification in 1200, when Philip was bought off from Arthur's cause by the cession of the county of Evreux; but he took arms again in 1202, on the flimsy pretext that John, as Duke of Normandy, refused to plead in French law courts against his own vassals.

Philip was induced to resume the struggle mainly because of his rival's growing unpopularity in all parts of his dominion. As king, John displayed on a larger scale all the faults that he had shown before his accession. All the vices of the Angevin house reached their highest development in him; he was as hot-tempered as his father, as false as his mother, as ungrateful as his brother Henry, as cruel, extravagant, and reckless as his brother Richard. His own special characteristic was a crooked and short-sighted cunning, which brought him through the troubles of one moment only to involve him in deeper vexations in the next. His reign in England had begun with heavy taxation for the French war. He had irritated the baronage by divorcing his wife Hawise, the heiress of the great earldom of Gloucester, without any cause or reason. Then he had carried off by violence Isabella of Angoulême from her affianced husband, the Count of La Marche, one of his greatest vassals in Aquitaine, and married her in spite of the threats of the Church.

Character and policy of John.

It was Count Hugh of La Marche who in revenge led the next rising of the unruly French vassals of John. He sent for Arthur of Brittany, who came to his aid with a great band of King Philip's knights, and together they invaded Aquitaine and laid siege to Mirebeau, where lay the old Queen Eleanor, John's one trusty supporter in the south. Roused by the news of his mother's danger, the King of England made a hasty dash on Mirebeau, surprised the rebel camp, and captured Arthur of Brittany with all his chief

Murder of Arthur of Brittany.

supporters. This success was fated to be his ruin, for when he found his nephew in his hands, John could not resist the temptation to murder him. After keeping him in prison for some months, he had him secretly slain in the castle of Rouen (April, 1203). The poor lad had only just reached the age of sixteen when he was thus cut off.

Arthur's murder profoundly shocked John's subjects on both sides of the sea, but it was absolutely fatal to his cause in France.

Loss of John's continental dominions.

His rebellious subjects, unable to use Arthur's name against their master any longer, threw themselves into the hands of the King of France, and took him as their direct lord and sovereign. Philip went through a solemn form of summoning John, as Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, to present himself at Paris, and there be tried for slaying his nephew. When John failed—as was natural—to appear, he was condemned in his absence, and adjudged to have forfeited all the fiefs that he held from the French crown.

To give effect to his sentence, Philip invaded Normandy and began to lay siege to its fortresses. John crossed to Normandy, but did not take the field ; his conduct was so strange that men thought that some infatuation from heaven had fallen upon him as a judgment for having slain his nephew. He lay at Rouen for many months, giving great feasts, and boasting that when he chose he would drive King Philip out of the duchy. But, instead of sallying out to make his vaunts good, he quietly looked on, while Philip took town after town with little resistance. The Normans did not love John, and fought feebly or not at all. Only Château Gaillard, a great castle which Richard I. had built to guard the valley of the lower Seine, made any serious defence. Instead of opposing the enemy, John fled from Normandy and took refuge in England. After his departure, Rouen and the remaining cities of the duchy threw open their gates to the French. In the following year Philip pursued his victorious career, and completed the conquest of Anjou and Touraine. In 1206 he fell upon Aquitaine, and conquered Poitou and Northern Guienne. Only the great ports of Bordeaux and La Rochelle, with the southern half of Guienne, remained true to John.

Thus passed away, not only the great but ephemeral continental empire which Henry II. had built up, but also the Norman duchy itself, whose fortunes had been united to those of England for

nearly a century and a half. For the future the Plantagenet kings owned only a corner of southern France, and were no longer great continental sovereigns. The monarch's loss was the nation's gain. England's kings were no longer foreigners; they did not spend half their time abroad, or devote their whole energy to schemes of aggrandisement in France. The Anglo-Norman barons, too, were compelled to become wholly English, since their estates over-sea fell into the hands of the enemy and passed away from them. In this way John's cruelty and shiftlessness did more for England's good than the wisdom and strength of his father.

But in the mean while John, being deprived of his continental dominions, was constrained to reside in England, and proved a most undesirable neighbour to his unhappy subjects. After an unsuccessful attempt to reconquer Poitou in 1206, he made peace with King Philip, on such terms as he could obtain. Bordeaux and the duchy of Guienne remained with him, but he was compelled to acquiesce in the loss of all his other provinces.

John was barely quit of his disastrous French war when he became involved in a quarrel with the papacy, of which the issue was even more disgraceful than that of his strife with King Philip. In 1205 died Archbishop Hubert Walter, who had served King Richard so well as Justiciar. In ordinary times his successor would have been duly nominated by the king and elected by the monks of Canterbury, who formed the cathedral chapter of that see. But John was in evil plight at the time; he was universally disliked, and the clergy all over Europe were being spurred on by the example of the bold and arrogant Pope Innocent III. to assert new and unheard-of claims and privileges. When the news of Hubert's death was brought, a majority of the monks of Canterbury met in secret conclave and elected Reginald, their sub-prior, as archbishop, without asking the king's leave. Reginald at once started off for Rome to get his appointment confirmed by Pope Innocent. When John heard what had been done, he came to Canterbury in great wrath, and by threats and menaces compelled the monks to proceed to a second election, and to chose his favourite, John de Grey, Bishop of Norwich, to fill Hubert Walter's place. He then sent an embassy to Rome to submit this election to the Pope. But Innocent III. would

Quarrel with Innocent III.—Stephen Langton.

have neither Reginald nor John for archbishop; he said that the first had been secretly and illegally chosen, while the second had been imposed on the chapter by force and threats. Then he took the unprecedented step of appointing to the see himself; he made the representatives of both John and Reginald come before him, and frightened or cajoled them into accepting his nominee, Stephen Langton, a worthy and learned English cardinal who resided with him at Rome. Langton was personally all that could be desired, but it was a flagrantly illegal usurpation that the Pope should impose him on the English king and nation without their consent.

John was driven to fury by this arrogant claim of the Pope. He refused to accept the nomination, or to allow Langton to enter England. In return Innocent laid an interdict on the realm, suspending on his own authority the celebration of divine service, closing the churches, and even prohibiting the dead from being buried in consecrated ground. If the English Church had stood by the king and refused to take notice of this harsh decree, it would have been of little effect. But the clergy always followed the Pope; they looked upon themselves as a great international guild depending on the Roman see, and disregarded all their rights and sympathies as Englishmen. The majority of the bishops published the interdict, and bade their flocks observe it. Many of them, fearing John's inevitable wrath, fled over-sea the moment that they had promulgated the sentence (1208). They were wise to do so, for the king raged furiously against the whole body of clergy; he exiled the monks of Canterbury, seized the estates and revenues of the absconding bishops, and declared that, till the interdict was removed, all ecclesiastical persons should be outside the pale of the law. They should not be allowed to appear in the courts, and no one who molested them should be punished. John set the example of seizing clerical property himself, and many of his courtiers and officers followed his lead.

The interdict.

Thus began a long struggle between the power of the Pope and that of the king. For five years it continued, to the great misery of England, for the nation was deeply religious, and felt most keenly the deprivation of all its spiritual privileges. Yet for a long time the people stood by the king, for it was generally felt that the Pope's arbitrary conduct

The Pope deposes John.

was indefensible. John himself cared nought for papal censures, as long as nothing more than spiritual pressure was brought to bear on him. He filled his coffers with Church money, and laughed at the interdict. But presently Innocent found a more effective way of bending the king's will. He proclaimed that he would depose John for contumacy, and give his kingdom to another. The mandate to drive him out was entrusted to John's old and active foe, Philip of France, who at once began to prepare a great fleet and army in Normandy (1213).

John's surrender.

The English barons and people were more angered than frightened, and a great army mustered on Barham Down, in Kent, to oppose the French landing. But the king himself was much cowed by the Pope's threat. He knew that he was disliked and despised by his subjects, and he did not trust them in the hour of danger. Instead of fighting the quarrel out, he made secret proffers of submission. So the Pope's envoy, Pandulf, came to Dover, and received John's abject surrender. Not only did he agree to acknowledge Langton as archbishop, and to restore all the lands and revenues of which he had robbed the Church, but he stooped to win Innocent's favour by doing homage to him, and declaring the kingdom of England a fief of the Holy See. He gave his crown into Pandulf's hands, and then took it back from him as a gift from the Pope. In return the papal mandate to Philip was withdrawn, and Pandulf bade the French king dismiss his fleet and army, and cease to make war on the vassal of the Church (May, 1213).

John's gift of the English crown to the Pope had been done secretly and privately, without any summoning or consulting of the Great Council; it had been accomplished behind the back of the nation. When it became known, the baronage and the people were alike disgusted at the king's grovelling submission. He had induced them to suffer untold miseries in his cause, and had then left them in the lurch and surrendered all that they had been fighting for.

Destruction of the French fleet.

For the moment, however, John's intrigue had its success. The papal approval was withdrawn from the King of France, and—what was of more importance—an English fleet under William Longsword, the Earl of Salisbury fell upon the French invasion-flotilla as it lay

in the Port of Damme, and took or sunk well-nigh every vessel. The king was free from danger again, and talked of taking the offensive against the French and crushing his enemy Philip.

The last act of John's troubled reign was now beginning. While the king was dreaming of nothing but war in France, the nation was preparing to put a stop to his erratic and tyrannical rule by armed force. When Archbishop Langton was received in England, he proved himself no mere creature of the Pope, but a good Englishman. One of his first acts was to propose to the baronage, at a great assembly in St. Paul's Cathedral, that the king should be asked to ratify and reissue the charter that his great-grandfather Henry I. had granted to the English people, binding himself to abstain from all vexatious and oppressive customs, and abide by the ancient customs of the realm. This proposal was accepted at once by the great majority of the barons as the wisest and most constitutional means of bringing pressure on the king.

The baronage and Archbishop Langton.

John meanwhile had called out the whole military force of the nation for an invasion of France. But all the barons of the North refused to follow him, and so great was the discontent of the English that he had mainly to depend on foreign mercenaries. He staked all his fortunes on the ensuing campaign, believing that if he could reconquer his lost continental dominions, he would afterwards win his way to complete control in England. His schemes were very far-reaching: Philip was to be attacked from north and south at once; while John was to land in Poitou and march on the Loire, a great confederacy of John's allies were to assail France from the north. This league was headed by John's nephew, Otho of Saxony, who claimed the title of emperor, but had been withstood in Germany by competitors whom Philip of France had supported. In revenge Otho gathered a North-German army, supported by the Dukes of Brabant and Holland, and the Counts of Boulogne and Flanders. John sent a mercenary force under the Earl of Salisbury to join him, and the combined host entered France and met King Philip at Bouvines, near Lille. John had trusted that his own attack on southern France would have distracted the French king's attention, but Philip left him almost unopposed, and

Invasion of France.—Defeat and return of John.

gathered the whole force of France to oppose the Germans and Flemings. While John was overrunning Poitou and storming Angers, Philip was crushing his confederates. At the battle of Bouvines the combined army was scattered to the winds; the emperor was put to flight, and the Earl of Salisbury and the Count of Boulogne captured (July 27, 1214). Otho of Saxony was ruined by the fight, and never raised his head again; nor did any German host invade France for the next three hundred years. John, though he had not been present at the fight, was as effectually crushed as Otho. Free from danger from the north, the French king turned upon him, and drove him out of his ephemeral conquests in Poitou, so that he had to return to England completely foiled and beaten.

But in England John had now to face his angry baronage. When he came home in wrath, and began to threaten to punish every man who had not followed him to the invasion of France, the barons drew together and prepared for armed resistance. In earlier days we have seen the English nobility withstanding the king in the cause of feudal anarchy. In the time of Stephen or of Henry II., the crown had represented the interests of the nation, and the barons those of their own class alone. It was then for England's good that the king should succeed in establishing a strong central government by putting down his turbulent vassals. But now things were changed. Henry II. had made the crown so strong that the nation was in far greater danger of misgovernment by a tyrannical king than of anarchy under a mob of feudal chiefs. The barons did not any longer represent themselves alone; they were closely allied both with the Church and with the people for the defence of the common rights of all three against a grasping and unscrupulous monarch. In the present struggle the baronage were headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, their wisest counsellor, and they were everywhere supported both by the towns and by the smaller freemen of the whole realm. We shall see that in the oncoming struggle they demanded, not new privileges for themselves, but law and liberty for every subject of the English crown.

The barons take up arms.

The first meeting of the barons was held at Bury St. Edmunds, in November, 1214: it was attended mainly by the lords of the North; the majority of the nobility had not yet moved. They

formulated their demand that the king should give England a charter of liberties, drew up a list of the points which were to be insisted on, and determined to go in arms to the king at Christmas to lay their requests before him. John was seriously frightened ; he asked the Pope's aid, took the vows of a crusader in order to get the sympathy of the Church on his side, and collected an army of mercenaries. But when he sounded the intentions of those of his vassals who had not yet taken arms, he found that one and all approved of the demands of the insurgent barons, and refused to aid him against them.

John was always lacking in moral courage ; instead of taking the field at the head of his mercenaries, he began to treat with the rebels, resolved to grant all they asked, and then to bide his time and repudiate his promises at the earliest possible opportunity. So befell the famous meeting at Runnymede, where the king solemnly swore to grant all the provisions of the "Great Charter," which had been drawn up for his signature by Archbishop Langton and a committee composed of an equal number of the insurgent barons and of those who had not taken up arms.

Meeting at Runnymede.

The Great Charter was signed on the 15th of June, 1215, in the presence of the archbishop, the whole of the baronage, and a vast assembly of all ranks. It is a document of sixty-three clauses, of which many were quite trivial and related to purely personal or local grievances. But the important part of its provisions may be summed up under six heads.

The Great Charter.

1 Firstly, the king promises that "the English Church shall be free"—free, that is, from violent interference in the election of its prelates, and from illegal taxation.

2 Secondly, the feudal rights of the king over his tenants-in-chief are defined. He is only to raise the customary "aids" and dues, and their amount is laid down. His rights of wardship over widows and orphans are stated and limited. In a similar way the tenants-in-chief promise to exercise only these same rights over their own vassals.

3 Thirdly, there is to be no taxation without the consent of the Great Council—the first indication of the control of Parliament over the national revenues.

4 Fourthly, the administration of justice is to be strengthened

and purified. No one is to be tried or punished more than once for the same offence. No one is to be imprisoned on the king's private fiat, but if arrested he must be at once put on trial, and that before a jury of his peers. Fines for every sort of offence are to be fixed and made proportionate to the crime, not to the king's idea of the amount he could extract from the criminal.

5 Fifthly, the king is not to put foreigners, ignorant of the laws of England, in any judicial or administrative post, and he is at once to dismiss all his foreign mercenary troops.

6 Sixthly, the city of London, and all other cities which enjoy rights and privileges under earlier royal charters, are to be fully confirmed in them.

The Great Charter then plunges into a mass of smaller grievances, where we need not follow it. But it ends with a most peculiar and important clause, which shows how little the baronage trusted the king. A body of twenty-five guardians of the Charter is appointed, who undertake to see that the king carries it out, and they are authorized to constrain him to observe it by force of arms if he swerves from his plighted word. These guardians include seven earls, fourteen barons, three sons of great lords whose fathers still survived, and the Mayor of London.

The character of *Magna Carta* is very noticeable; it is rather unsystematic in shape, being mainly composed of a list of grievances which are to be remedied. It does not purport to be a full statement of the English constitution, but only a recapitulation of the points on which the king had violated it. But it is not merely a check on John's evil doings, but a solemn engagement between the king, the barons, the Church, and the people that each shall respect the rights of the other. Wherever it is stated that the king is to abstain from using any particular malpractice against his vassals, it is also added that his vassals will on their part never use that same form of oppression against their own tenants. Thus it guarantees the rights of the small man against the great, no less than those of the great man against the king. It is in this respect that the Charter differs from many grants of privileges exacted by foreign nobles from foreign kings. Abroad the barons often curbed the royal power, but they did it for their own selfish ends alone, not for the common good of the nation.

John had signed the Charter in a moment of fear and depression of spirits. He did not intend to observe it a moment longer than he could help, and called its provisions "mere foolishness." When the barons dispersed, he violated his engagements by gathering another great horde of mercenaries, and sent to Rome to his suzerain Innocent III., to get absolution from the oath he had sworn. As he had once utilized the nation against the Pope, so he would now utilize the Pope against the nation.

John's faithlessness.—Attitude of the Pope.

Innocent, who cared nothing for the rights or wrongs of England, resolved to support his obedient vassal. He censured Archbishop Langton for siding with the barons, and summoned him to Rome to answer for his conduct. He freed the king from his oath, and he swore that he would excommunicate any man who took arms against him. But John had taught his barons to despise ecclesiastical thunders. They flew to arms, and war broke out. The king at first had the advantage; his mercenaries were all at hand, and the barons were scattered and unorganized. The king took Rochester, and hung the garrison who held out against him, and then started northward, harrying the land with fire and sword as far as Berwick.

Civil war.

Provoked beyond endurance, the majority of the barons swore that they would cast away John and all his house. They declared him deposed, and resolved to choose a new king. But they made a great mistake in their choice, for they offered the crown to Lewis, the Prince-royal of France, who had married Blanche, one of John's nieces. Any other candidate would have been better, for Lewis was the son of King Philip, the great enemy of England, and by calling him in, the barons seemed to be allying themselves with the national foe. Many who would have gladly served against John in another cause, refused to take arms in that of the Frenchman (1216).

Lewis of France elected king by the barons.

Meanwhile Prince Lewis landed in Kent, was received into London, and became master of all eastern England. But he soon found that he was the king of a faction, not of the whole nation. Many of the barons joined John rather than serve a foreigner; many more remained neutral. The whole realm was divided; here and

Lewis in England.—Death of John.

there castles and towns held out against the new king, and in especial the seamen and merchants of the Cinque Ports refused to open their gates to a Frenchman. John resolved to try the ordeal of battle; he took Lincoln, and marched southward. But while his army was crossing the sea-marshes of the Wash it was overtaken by a high tide, and all his baggage and treasure, with many of his men, were swept away. John himself escaped with difficulty, and fell ill next day, of rage and grief and over-exertion, as is most probable, though contemporary writers thought he had been poisoned. To the great benefit of England, he died within a week, within the walls of Newark Castle (October 19, 1216). No man had a good word to say for him; cruel, perjured, rash and cowardly by turns, an evil-liver, a treacherous son and brother, he was loathed by every one who knew him.

CHAPTER X.

HENRY III.

1216–1272.

THE moment that John was dead, the insurgent barons began to be conscious of the huge mistake that they had made in calling over Lewis of France to their aid. John's successor was his eldest son Henry, a young boy of nine, against whom no one could feel any personal objection. But the rebels had committed themselves to the cause of Lewis, and could not go back. The civil war therefore continued, but the supporters of Lewis were without heart or enthusiasm in his cause.

The young Henry was in the hands of William the Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, one of the great barons who had refused to join Lewis. Pembroke at once crowned the young king at Gloucester, and made him declare his adherence to the Great Charter, and solemnly republish it. This act cut away the ground from under the feet of Lewis's party, as they could not any longer pretend that they were fighting merely to recover their constitutional rights. One after another they began to drop away, and go over to Henry's side.

William, Earl of Pembroke.—Henry crowned.

The fortune of the civil war soon began to turn in favour of the young king. It was decided by two great battles. Lincoln castle was being besieged by the followers of Lewis, French and English. To relieve it William the Marshal set out with a small army, and, surprising the enemy in the streets of the town, while they were busied in the siege, he inflicted a great defeat upon them. Most of the great English barons of Lewis's party were taken prisoners in the fray. Shortly after a second decisive engagement completely shattered Lewis's hopes. He was expecting

Defeat of Lewis.—English naval victory.

great reinforcements from France, which were to be brought to him by a fleet commanded by Eustace the Monk, a cruel pirate captain whom he had hired to serve him because of his naval skill. But Hubert de Burgh, the Justiciar of King Henry, put to sea from Dover with a small squadron of ships raised from the Cinque Ports, and met the French in mid-channel off Sandwich. The English had the better, most of the hostile vessels were captured, and Eustace the Monk was taken and hung for his former piracies. This was the first great naval battle which an English fleet ever won.

Deprived of hope of succour from France, and seeing most of his English supporters captives in Pembroke's hands, Prince Lewis resolved to abandon his enterprise and leave England. He proffered terms to Pembroke and de Burgh, who eagerly accepted them. So by the treaty of Lambeth he undertook to depart and give up his claim to the crown, while the Earl Marshal and Justiciar on their part consented to grant an amnesty to all Lewis's partisans, and to restore them to possession of their estates. To facilitate Lewis's quick retreat he was given a sum of 10,000 marks (September 17, 1217).

Thus the civil war came to an end, but its evil effects long endured. William of Pembroke, who acted till his death in 1219 as regent of the realm, did all that he could to quiet matters down; but there was much trouble left to his successor, Hubert de Burgh, the great Justiciar, who bore sway in England for all the remaining years of King Henry's minority. Hubert conferred many and signal benefits on the realm. He discomfited an attempt of the Pope to govern England through his legates, under the plea that John's homage of 1213 made the kingdom the property of the Holy See. He put down the turbulence of many of John's old courtiers and mercenaries, who, presuming on their fidelity in the civil war, refused obedience to the law of the land. The leaders of these persons were Peter des Roches, an intriguing Poitevin whom John had made Bishop of Winchester, and Fawkes de Bréauté, who had been the chief captain of the late king's Gascon soldiers. Peter was compelled to go on a Crusade, and Fawkes was crushed by force of arms when he presumed to refuse to give up the king's castle of Bedford, and had the impudence to seize and imprison a justice of assize who had given a legal

Hubert de Burgh Justiciar.

decision against him. Fawkes himself escaped over-seas, but de Burgh took Bedford Castle, and hung William de Bréauté, the rebel's brother, because he had dared to hold out against the king's name (1224).

Hubert's wise and salutary rule endured till the king came of age (1227), and for some years after he was still retained as Justiciar. But Henry, on coming to maturity, soon showed himself jealous of the great man who had protected his helpless boyhood. The new king was a strange mixture of good and evil. He was a handsome, courteous youth, blameless in his private life, and kind and liberal to his friends. He proved a good father and husband, and a great friend to the Church. He loved the fine arts, and built many stately edifices, of which the famous abbey of Westminster is the best known. But he had many serious faults: he was an incorrigible spendthrift; he was quite incapable of keeping any promise for more than a few days. He was of a busy volatile disposition, always vaulting from project to project, and never carrying to its end any one single plan. Being full of self-confidence he much disliked any one who gave him unpalatable counsel, or strove to keep him from any of his wild ephemeral schemes. This was the secret of his ingratitude to Hubert de Burgh, who never shrank from opposing his young master when the occasion demanded it. Moreover, Henry had the great fault of loving foreigners over-much; he surrounded himself with a horde of his relatives from the continent. His wife Eleanor of Provence brought a host of brothers and uncles from Savoy and southern France, and his mother sent over to England her children by her second marriage with her old lover, the Count of La Marche.* On these kinsmen Henry lavished not only great gifts of money, but earldoms, baronies, and bishoprics, to the great vexation of the English. His strangest act was to confer the archbishopric of Canterbury on his wife's uncle, Boniface of Savoy, a flighty young man of most unclerical habits. Henry was not cruel or malicious, like his father, and personally he was not disliked by his subjects, a fact which explains the patience with which they bore his vagaries for many years. But his actions were nearly always unwise, and his undertakings were invariably unsuccessful, so that his long-

Character of Henry.—His foreign favourites.

* See p. 123.

suffering vassals were at last constrained to take the reins of government out of his hands.

For thirty years, however, Henry worked his will on England (1228–58) before drawing down the storm on his head. For the first five of them he was still somewhat restrained by the influence of Hubert de Burgh. But in 1232 the old Justiciar was not only dismissed, but thrown into prison, because Henry was wroth with him for frustrating an unwise and unnecessary war with France. But the king's ingratitude provoked such angry opposition that Hubert was ultimately released, and suffered to dwell in peace on his own lands.

Dismissal of Hubert de Burgh.—Personal government.

After dismissing Hubert, Henry threw himself into the hands of Peter des Roches, the Bishop of Winchester, one of John's old courtiers. Peter knew or cared nothing about English laws and customs, and led the king into so many illegal and unconstitutional acts, that the whole nation called for his banishment. At last the Great Council, led by Edmund of Abingdon, the saintly Archbishop of Canterbury, frightened the king into dismissing him (1234).

But England did not profit very much by Peter's fall. Henry resolved to become his own prime minister; he did not appoint any one to the office of Justiciar, and a little later he abolished that of Chancellor also. He thought that he would act as his own chief justice and private secretary, but, as he was no less volatile than busy, he only succeeded in getting all public business into hopeless arrears.

Henry's personal government endured for the weary time of twenty-four years. The events of the period were very insignificant, and only call for very brief mention. The sole foreign war was a brief struggle with Lewis IX. of France. One of Henry's many ephemeral schemes was the idea of winning back the continental dominions that his father had lost. So in 1241 he picked a quarrel with the good King Lewis, and invaded Poitou. He was disgracefully beaten at the battle of Taillebourg (1242), and was forced to make peace. The mild and pious King of France contented himself with leaving things as they had been before the war, though if he had chosen he might have forced Henry to surrender Bordeaux and Guienne, the last possessions of the English crown beyond the seas.

War with France.

Far worse for England than Henry's abortive invasion of France were his dealings with the papacy. Henry was a devoted servant of the Church, and whenever the Popes tried to lay any burden on England, Henry did his best to make the nation submit. Rome was at this time deep in a struggle with the brave and brilliant Emperor Frederic II., and the Popes were always wanting money to keep up the war against him. In 1238 Gregory IX. sent over to England his legate, Cardinal Otho, who pretended to come to reform the clergy, but really did little more than extort great sums of money from them, on all possible excuses. When he left the realm it was said that he took more English Church treasure with him than he left behind, and he had thrust 300 Italian priests into English benefices by the aid of the king's patronage. A few years later Henry allowed himself to be made the Pope's tool in an even more disgraceful way. Alexander IV. was trying to wrest the kingdom of Sicily from the heirs of the Emperor Frederic II., and, as he could not succeed by his own strength, determined to make the docile King of England do the work for him. So he offered to make Henry's younger son Edmund, a boy of ten, King of Sicily, if Henry would undertake the expense of conquering that country. The scheme was just one of the wild adventurous plans that took the flighty monarch's fancy, so he eagerly accepted the Sicilian crown for his son, and promised the Pope that he would find the money to raise a great army. But as he had never any gold in his own treasury—since he spent it all on his buildings and his wife's relatives—he had to raise the great sums required for the invasion of Sicily out of the nation. In 1257, therefore, he summoned the Great Council, and told them that he must at once have liberal grants from them, because he had pledged England's credit to the Pope, and had made the realm responsible to Alexander IV. for 140,000 marks. The baronage were full of rage and disgust, for the conquest of Sicily was no concern of England's, but a matter of private spite on the part of the papacy. And, moreover, the king had not the least right to pledge the revenues of England to Alexander without having consulted the Great Council. Instead, therefore, of a grant of 140,000 marks, Henry received the outpourings of thirty years of suppressed indignation and

Henry's servility to the Pope.—Exasperation of the baronage.

discontent. He was told that he could no longer be allowed to rule the realm without the aid and counsel of his barons; that his interference in distant wars was foolish; that his foreign relations were a flight of locusts eating up the land; that his ministers and favourites were unjust, greedy, and extortionate. The king was seriously frightened, and consented to call another Great Council together at Oxford, to provide for the better governance of the realm, and not merely for the payment of his own debts.

Simon de Montfort.

The sudden outburst of wrath on the part of the baronage in 1258 is explained not only by the fact that all men had lost patience with King Henry, for that had been the case for many years, but much more by the fact that the baronage had at last found a champion and mouthpiece in Simon de Montfort, the great Earl of Leicester. Simon was not one who might have been expected to prove a wise and patriotic statesman and a good Englishman, for he had originally come into notice as one of the king's foreign favourites. His grandmother had been the heiress of the earldom of Leicester, but she had married a Frenchman, the Count of Montfort. Their child was Simon the elder, a great crusading chief and a cruel persecutor of heretics. He was a bitter enemy of King John, and had never been permitted to get hold of the Leicester estates. In 1232 his son Simon the younger came across to England, to beg King Henry to make over to him the confiscated lands of his grandmother's earldom. Henry could never resist a petitioner, especially when he was a foreigner; he not only took Simon into favour and granted him the earldom of Leicester, but he married him to his sister, the Princess Eleanor, and for a time made him his confidant. But the king's sudden friendship did not endure, and ere very long he tired of Simon, and sent him over to govern Guienne, which was always in a state of chronic insurrection. Simon put down rebellion with a strong hand, and made himself unpopular with the Gascons, who sent many complaints of him to the king. But the fatal cause of estrangement between him and the earl was a money matter: Simon had expended large sums in the king's service, using his own money and borrowing more. When he sent in his accounts to Henry, the latter could not or would not pay, and very meanly allowed the loss to fall on Simon (1250).

Simon then settled down into opposition to the king, though he was ready enough to serve the realm in all times of danger. He had now been living for many years in England, and his neighbours found him a just and sincere man, and one who had done his best to accustom himself to English ways of life and thought. He was especially beloved by the clergy, who admired his fervent piety and pure life. So it came to pass that the man who had once been known only as the king's favourite, was called Earl Simon the Righteous, and looked upon as the most patriotic and trustworthy of the nobles of the realm.

Great men had been singularly wanting among the ranks of the English baronage, since William of Pembroke died and Hubert de Burgh was disgraced. It was not till Simon came to the front as the king's opponent that the nation's discontent with Henry was adequately expressed.

The Great Council—or Parliament as we may now call it, since that word was just coming into use—met at Oxford in June, 1258, to take counsel for the better administration of England. Some called it the "Mad Parliament," because of the anger of the barons, and their desire to make hasty and sweeping changes. Henry, when he met it, found that he had no supporters save his foreign kinsmen and a few personal dependents, so that he was forced to submit to all the conditions which the barons imposed upon him.

The Provisions of Oxford.

So were ratified the "Provisions of Oxford," which provided for the government of England, not by the king, but by a group of committees. Henry was to do nothing without the consent of a privy council of fifteen members, which was now imposed upon him. Another committee of twenty-four was to investigate and right all the grievances of the realm; and a third, also of twenty-four, was to take charge of the financial side of the government, pay off the king's debts, and administer his revenues. Henry was forced to make a solemn oath to abide by the rules stated in Magna Carta, which he had often before promised to keep, but had always evaded or disregarded after a time.

By the Provisions of Oxford the governance of the realm was taken altogether out of the hands of the king, and handed over to those of the three committees. But the new scheme was far too cumbersome, for neither of the three bodies had any

authority over the others, and it was difficult to keep them together. There were many who were jealous of Simon de Montfort, who sat in each of the three, and was the ruling spirit of the whole government. It was said that he took too much upon himself, and that the nation had not muzzled the king merely in order to hand itself over to be governed by the earl.

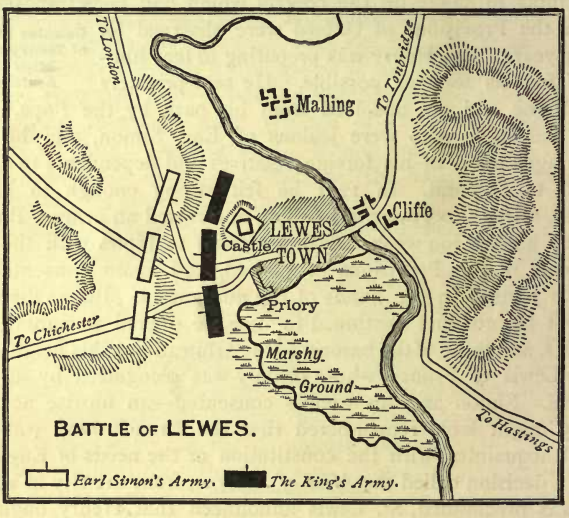
In spite of these murmurings, and in spite of the king's attempts to shake off the control which had been imposed on him, the Provisions of Oxford were observed for four years. But Henry was preparing to tear himself free as soon as possible. He sent privately to Rome and got absolved from his oath by the Pope. He courted those who were jealous of Earl Simon, and he encouraged many of his foreign relatives and dependents to creep back to England. In 1261 he felt strong enough to break loose, seized the Tower of London, and raised an army. But he found himself too weak, dared not come to blows with the adherents of the Provisions of Oxford, and again consented to place himself in the hands of the guarantors. But as disputes about his conduct continued to arise, he offered to submit his rights, and those of the barons, to the arbitration of his neighbour, St. Lewis of France, whose probity was recognized by all the world. Simon and his friends consented—an unwise act, for they might have remembered that the French king was not well acquainted with the constitution or the needs of England. By a decision called the *Mise of Amiens*, from the city at which it was proclaimed, St. Lewis announced that Henry ought to abide by the customs stated in Magna Carta, but that he need not keep the Provisions of Oxford, which were dishonourable to his crown and kingly dignity (1263).

Counter-efforts of Henry.—The Mise of Amiens.

The Mise of Amiens precipitated the outbreak of civil war, for Simon and his party refused to accept the decision which had been given against them, though they had promised to abide by it. This flinching from their word alienated from them many who would otherwise have taken the side of reform, and it was felt that a grave responsibility lay on Simon for striking the first blow. Hence it came to pass that the king was supported by a larger party than might have been expected. His own brother and son, Richard of Cornwall and Prince Edward, who had hitherto usually

Civil war breaks out.

leaned to the party of reform and striven to guide him towards moderation, now supported him with all their power. The Earls of Norfolk and Hereford and many other great barons also took arms in his favour. Earl Simon, on the other hand, was helped by the Earls of Gloucester and Derby, and enthusiastically supported by the citizens of London, who had been maddened by the king's arbitrary taxes.



When, after much preliminary fighting, the armies of Henry and Simon faced each other in Sussex for a decisive battle, it was found that the king had much the larger army. He drew up his host outside the walls of Lewes, while Simon, who had marched from London, lay on the downs beyond it. When the shock came, the fiery Prince Edward, who led the right wing of the royalists, fell furiously on Simon's left wing, which was mainly composed of the levies of London, and drove them far off the field. But, carried away by his pursuit, he never thought of returning to help his father, and meanwhile Earl Simon had beaten the king's division, and rolled the royalist army back against the town wall of Lewes, where those of them who could not enter

Battle of Lewes.—The Mise of Lewes.

the gate at once were taken prisoners. Among the captives were the king himself, his brother Richard of Cornwall, and most of the chiefs of the royalist party. Prince Edward, rather than continue the civil war, gave himself up to the insurgents on the following day, to share his father's fate (May, 1264).

The immediate result of the battle was the issue of a document called the *Mise of Lewes*, by which King Henry promised to keep the charter, to dismiss all his foreign relatives and dependents, and to place himself under the control of a privy council, whom Parliament should choose to act as his ministers and guardians.

A Parliament was hastily summoned and delegated three electors to nominate this privy council, namely, Earl Simon, the Earl of Gloucester, and the Bishop of Chichester. The electors, naturally but unwisely, appointed none but their own trusted supporters. Thus England came under the rule of a party, and a party whose violent action had been disliked by a great portion of the nation. The king was but a puppet in their hands; he was practically their prisoner, for three of the council always attended his steps and kept him in sight. Now, Henry, irritating and faithless as his conduct had always been, was not personally disliked, and the sight of their monarch led about like a captive and forced to obey every behest of his captors, was very displeasing to many who had formerly felt no sympathy for him. It was felt, too, that his son Edward was being very hardly treated by being kept in honourable captivity and deprived of all share in the government; for the prince had taken the side of reform till the outbreak of the civil war, had only joined his father when Simon took arms, and had behaved with great patriotism and self-denial in refusing to continue the struggle after Lewes.

Rule of Simon de Montfort.—Captivity of the king and Prince Edward.

For two years Earl Simon governed England, and the king was kept under close guard. This period was not one of peace or prosperity; the land was still troubled by the echoes of the civil war, and in his anxiety to maintain his dominant position the earl incurred many accusations of harshness and rapacity. He was especially blamed for depriving Prince Edward of his earldom of Chester, for favouring Llewellyn Prince of North Wales in his quarrel with Roger Mortimer, a great lord of the Welsh marches who had been on the king's side at Lewes, but

most of all for giving too much trust and power to his own sons. The young Montforts were rash and arrogant men, who harmed the people's cause more by their turbulence than they aided it by their courage and fidelity. In short, they were as Samuel's sons of old, and wrought their father no small damage and discredit.

The chief event for which Earl Simon's tenure of power is remembered is his summons of the celebrated Parliament of 1265.

The Parliament of 1265.—Representation of Shires and Boroughs.

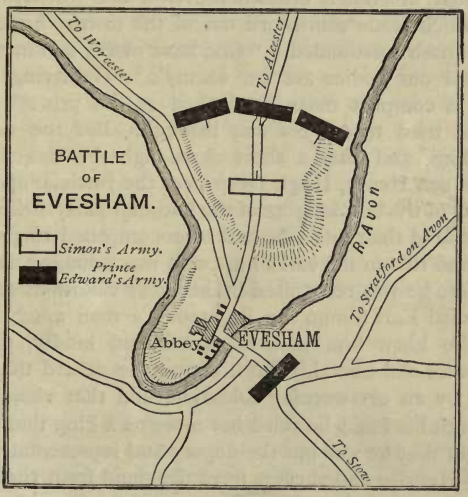
This incident is noteworthy, not so much for anything that the Parliament did, as for the new system on which it was constructed. Hitherto the Great Council had usually been composed only of the barons and bishops, though on two or three occasions in the thirteenth century the smaller vassals of the crown had been represented by the summons of two knights from each shire, chosen in the county court by all the freeholders of the district. But de Montfort not only called these "knights of the shire" to his Parliament of 1265, but also summoned two citizens or two burgesses from each of the chief cities and boroughs of the realm. Thus he was the first to give the towns representation, and to put together the three elements, lords, borough members, and county members, which form the Parliament of to-day. It must be confessed that Simon's immediate object was probably to strengthen his own side in the assembly, rather than to initiate a scheme for the reform of the Great Council in a democratic direction. Many barons were against him, and them he did not summon at all. Many more were jealous or distrustful of him, and it was mainly in order to swamp their opposition that he called up the great body of knights of the shire and members for the towns,—for London and the rest of the chartered cities were strongly in favour of his cause.

This Parliament confirmed all Simon's acts; outlawed those of the king's party who had fled over-seas, and refused to accept the terms of the Mise of Lewes; imposed a three-years exile in Ireland on some of those who had made only a tardy submission, and put all the royal castles into the hands of trusty partisans of the earl. It made few regulations for the better governance of the realm, but left everything in Simon's hands and at his discretion.

It was impossible that the regency of the great earl should

last for long. There were too many men in England who felt that it was unseemly that the king and his son should live in close restraint, while one who, in spite of all his merits, was still a foreigner and an adventurer, ruled the realm. The beginning of Simon's troubles came from a quarrel with his own chief supporter, the young Earl of Gloucester. Gilbert de Clare thought that he was not admitted to a sufficient share in the government of the kingdom, and soon fell into a bitter feud with Simon's sons. His anger led him into

Prince Edward escapes.



conspiring against the great earl. By his counsel Prince Edward escaped from his keepers, by an easy stratagem and a swift horse. Once free, the prince called his party to arms, and was joined by Gloucester, Mortimer, and many of the barons of the Welsh marches.

On hearing of this rising in the west, Montfort hurried to the Welsh border with a small army, taking the king in his train. He bade Simon, the second of his sons, to collect a larger army and follow him. But Edward and Gloucester seized the line of the Severn, and threw themselves between father and son. The earl retraced his steps, slipped back across the Severn, and

reached Evesham, while his son had marched as far as Kenilworth, so that a few miles only separated them. But Edward lay between, and was eager for the fight.

By a sudden and unexpected attack the prince surprised and scattered young Montfort's army under the walls of Kenilworth; he then hurried off to attack Simon. The earl lay in Evesham town, which is girt round by a deep loop of the river Avon. Edward and Gloucester seized the narrow neck of this loop, while another royalist force, under Mortimer, crossed the river and watched the only bridge which leads southward out of the town. Simon awoke to find himself surrounded. "God have mercy on our souls," he cried, "for our bodies are our enemy's." Gathering his little army in a compact mass, he dashed at the prince's superior force, and tried to cut his way through. But the odds were against him, and after a short sharp fight he was slain, with his eldest son Henry, Hugh Despencer the Justiciar of England, and many of the best knights of the baronial party. King Henry almost shared their fate: he had been compelled to put on his armour and ride in the earl's host, and was wounded and almost slain before he was recognized by his son's victorious soldiery.

Battle of Evesham.—Death of Simon de Montfort.

Thus died Earl Simon the Righteous, a man much loved by those who knew him well, courteous and kindly, pious and honest, wise and liberal. But it cannot be denied that he was touched by an overweening ambition, and that when England fell beneath his hand, he ruled her more as a king than a regent, and forgot that he was but the deputy and representative of the nation. His rise and success freed England from the thriftless rule of Henry, and set a boundary to the use of the royal prerogative. His short tenure of power gave the realm the valuable gift of the full and representative Parliament. His fall was sad but not disastrous to the English, for his work was done, and he was fast drifting into the position of the autocratic leader of a party, and ceasing to be the true exponent of the will of the whole nation.

The best testimony to the benefits that Simon had conferred on England was the fact that Henry III. never fell back into his old ways. He was now an elderly man, and in his captivity had lost much of his self-confidence and restless activity. He had been freed, not by his

Ascendency of Prince Edward.

own power, but by his son and the Earl of Gloucester, both of whom had been friends of reform, though enemies of Simon. Edward had now won an ascendency over his father which he never let slip, and his voice had for the future a preponderant share in the royal council. It is to his influence that we may ascribe the wise moderation with which the relics of Simon's party were treated.

Evesham fight did not end the war, for the three surviving sons of Simon, with the Earl of Derby and some other resolute friends, still held out. It took two years more to crush out the last sparks of civil strife, for the vanquished party fortified themselves in the castle of Kenilworth and the marshy isles of Ely and Axholme. But Edward gradually beat down all opposition, and the end of the war is marked by the *Dictum of Kenilworth* (October, 1266), in which the king solemnly confirms the Great Charter, and pardons all his opponents, on condition of their paying him a fine. Only the heirs of the Earls of Leicester and Derby were disinherited. The younger Montforts went into exile in Italy, where a little later they revenged themselves on the king by cruelly murdering his nephew Henry of Cornwall, as he was praying in Viterbo cathedral.

End of the civil war.

There is little to tell about the last five years of the reign of Henry III. The land gradually settled down into tranquillity, and we hear little more of the misgovernment which had rendered his early years so unbearable. Prince Edward went on a Crusade, when he saw that the realm was pacified. He greatly distinguished himself in the Holy Land, and took Nazareth from the infidels. He was still beating back the Saracen, when he was called home by the news of his father's decease. After a stormy life the old king had a peaceful ending, dying quietly in his bed on the 16th of November, 1272.

CHAPTER XI.

EDWARD I.

1272–1307.

THE confidence and admiration which the English nation felt for Prince Edward were well shown by the fact that he was proclaimed king on the day of his father's death without any form of election by the Parliament. This was the first time that the English crown was transferred by strict hereditary succession, and that the old traditions of the solemn choice by the Great Council were neglected. Edward was still absent in Palestine, but the government was carried on in his name without trouble or friction till he landed in England on August 2, 1274. It was nineteen months since his father had died, yet nothing had gone amiss in the interval, so great was the belief of the English in the wisdom and justice of the coming king.

Immediate accession of Edward.

Edward was probably the best and greatest ruler, save Alfred, that England has ever known. He was a most extraordinary contrast to his shifty father, and his cruel, treacherous grandsire. His private life was a model to all men; nothing could have shown a better conception of the respective claims of patriotism and of filial duty than his conduct during the civil war. His court was grave and virtuous, and his faithful wife, Eleanor of Castile, was the object of his chivalrous devotion. Edward was religious without superstition, liberal without unthriftiness, resolute without obstinacy. But the most striking feature of his character was his love of good faith and justice. His favourite device was *Pactum serva*, "Keep your promise," and in all his doings he strove to carry it out. It was this that made him such an admirable king for a country where constitutional liberty was just

His character.

beginning to develop itself. If he promised his Parliament to abandon any custom or introduce any reform, he might be trusted honestly to do his best to adhere to his engagement. It must not be supposed that he never fell out with his subjects; his conceptions of the rights and duties of a king were so high that it was impossible for him to avoid collisions with Parliament. But when such collisions occurred, though he fought them out with firmness, yet, if beaten, he accepted his defeat without rancour. His justice was perhaps too severe: he could pardon on occasion, but he had a stern way of dealing with those whom he regarded as traitors or oath-breakers; the chief blots on his reign are instances of merciless severity to conquered rebels. Edward has been accused of having sometimes adhered too closely to the letter of the law, when it told in his own favour, but there seems little reason to doubt that he was honestly following his own lights. Compared with any contemporary sovereign, he was a very mirror of justice and equity.

In addition to showing great merits as administrator, Edward was notable both as a good soldier and a wise general. His tall and robust frame and dauntless courage made him one of the best knights of his day. Yet he was no mere fighting man, but a skilled tactician. He had long forgotten the reckless impulsiveness that lost the day at Lewes, and had become one of the best captains of his age. He deserves a prominent place in the history of the art of war for being the first who discovered the military value of the English long-bowmen, and turned them to good account in his battles. Hitherto English generals, like continental, had been trusting entirely to the charge of their mailed cavalry. Edward, as we shall see at Falkirk, had learnt that the bowman was no less effective than the knight in the deciding of battles.

Edward as a general.

The years of Edward's long and eventful reign are full of interest and importance both within and without the bounds of England. The history of his legislation and of the development of the power of Parliament under him deserve close observation no less than his successful dealings with Wales, and his almost successful scheme for the conquest of Scotland. Nor can his relations with France be left without remark.

His legislation, most of which falls into the earlier years of his

reign, requires the first notice. Throughout the whole of it we trace a consistent purpose of strengthening the crown by restricting the rights both of the Church and the baronage. His first collision with the Church dates from 1279, when Archbishop Peckham made an attempt to reassert some of Becket's old doctrines as to the complete independence and wide scope of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. When Peckham summoned a national council of clergy at Reading in 1279, and issued certain "canons" in support of the independence of the Church courts, Edward replied not merely by compelling him to withdraw the objectionable document, but by passing the celebrated *Statute of Mortmain*, or *De Religiosis*, as it is sometimes called. This was a measure destined to prevent the further accumulation of estates in the "dead hand" (*in mortua manu*) of the Church. It was estimated that a fourth of the surface of England was already in the possession of the clerical body, and this land no longer paid its fair proportion of the taxes of the realm. For a large share of the king's revenue came from *reliefs*, or death-duties, and *escheats*, or resumption of lands to which there was no heir, and as a monastery or bishopric never died, the king got neither reliefs nor escheats from them. The statute prevented any man from alienating his land to the monasteries, and specially forbade the fraudulent practice of making ostensible gifts to the Church and receiving them back. For landholders had sometimes pretended to make over their estates to a monastery, in order to escape the taxation due on feudal fiefs, while really, by a corrupt agreement with the monks, they kept the property in their own power, and so enjoyed it tax-free. For the future land rarely fell into the "dead hand," since it could not be given away without the king's consent. Very few new monasteries were built or endowed after the passing of this statute, but the crown not unfrequently relaxed the rule in favour of the colleges in the universities, which were just now beginning to spring up.

Edward and the Church.—Statute of Mortmain.

Edward's dealings with the baronage are even more important in the history of the English constitution than his contest with the clerical body. He showed a consistent purpose of defending the rights of the crown against the great feudal lords, and of bringing all holders of land into close dependence on himself. His first attempt of

Edward and the baronage.—Writ of Quo Warranto.

the kind was the issue of the writ *Quo Warranto* in 1278. This writ was a royal mandate ordering an inquiry "by what warrant" many of the old royal estates had come into private hands, for the king thought that much state property had passed illegally out of the possession of the crown, by the thriftlessness of his father and the disorder of the civil wars of 1262–65. This project for an inquiry into old rights and documents both vexed and frightened the baronage. They murmured loudly. The tale is well known how John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey, when asked to produce the evidence of his right to certain lands, dashed down an old rusty sword before the commissioners, crying, "This is my title-deed. My ancestors came over with King William, and won their lands by the sword, and with this same sword I will maintain them against any one who tries to take them from me." The whole baronage showed such a hostile feeling against Edward's proposal that he finally contented himself with making a complete list of the still remaining crown lands, but did not raise the question of the resumption of long-alienated estates.

Another device of the king's for binding the landholders of the realm more closely to himself, was his scheme for making knights of all persons who held estates worth more than £20 a year. His object was not so much to gain the fees due from those who received knighthood, as to bring all the middle class of landholders, who held under the great feudal lords, into closer relation with himself through the homage and oath which they made to him after receiving the honour (1278).

In subsequent legislation Edward took care to conciliate the baronage by strengthening not only his rights over them, but their rights over their vassals. The most important of these was "*escheat*," the right of resuming possession of land when its holder died without an heir. This right was always liable to be defeated by the tenant selling his land; and its value was yet more diminished if he could dispose of part of the land, in such a way that the buyer became his own sub-tenant. A clause in Magna Charta had restricted this process, but the barons wished to limit even more their tenants' power of parting with land. On the other hand, as society became more industrial, and less warlike, it became more desirable that land should pass freely from man to man

The statute "De Donis."

These conflicting interests resulted in two enactments, which are landmarks in English History. The first, the *Second Statute of Westminster*, contains the famous clauses '*De Donis Conditionalibus*.' It forbade the alienation of land granted to a person and his actual lineal descendants, or to use a modern phrase, it made possible the creation of perpetual entails. The barons soon saw that it enabled them to settle their lands on their own families, and it was regularly employed for this purpose for about 200 years, till at last a legal fiction was invented which greatly cut down the power of tying up land.

On the other hand, the statute *Quia Emptores* (1290), far from restricting the power of alienation, expressly allowed it in all cases not coming within the statute *De Donis*: but at the same time it enacted that the purchaser, whether of the whole or part of an estate, should become the tenant, not of the seller, but of the seller's lord; in other words, it put an end to subinfeudation. This led, in the end, to the enormous multiplication of the lesser vassals of the crown, and tended to the ultimate extinction of all subtenancies, so that the king was the gainer in the long run, since whenever a great estate was broken up, he became the immediate lord of all those among whom it was dispersed.

The statute "Quia Emptores."

Besides the great statutes we have already named, several other items of King Edward's legislation demand a word of notice. The *Statute of Winchester* (1285) reorganized the national militia, the descendant of the old fyrd, ordaining what arms each man, according to his rank and wealth, should furnish for himself. It also provided for the establishment of a *watch* or local police for the suppression of robbers and outlaws.

The Statute of Winchester.

But all the king's doings were not so wise; to his discredit must be named his intolerant edict for the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290. Edward seems to have picked up in his crusading days a blind horror of infidels of all sorts. He disliked the Jews, somewhat for being inveterate clippers and debasers of the coinage, more for being usurers at extortionate rates in days when usury was held to be a deadly sin, but most of all for the mere reason that they were not Christians. To his own great loss—for the taxes of the Jews were a considerable item in his revenues—he banished

Expulsion of the Jews.

them all from the land, giving them three months to sell their houses and realize their debts. It was 360 years before they were again allowed to return to the realm.

The same years that are notable for the passing of the statutes of Mortmain and Quia Emptores, and for the expulsion of the Jews, were those in which the English Parliament was gradually growing into its permanent shape. We have already told how Simon de Montfort summoned in 1265 the first assembly which corresponds to our modern idea of a Parliament, by containing representatives from shires and boroughs, as well as a muster of the great barons and bishops who were tenants-in-chief of the crown. As it chanced Edward did not call a Great Council in exactly that same form till 1295, but in the intervening years he generally summoned knights of the shire to attend the deliberation of his lords, and consent to the granting of money. On two occasions in 1283 the cities and boroughs were also bidden to send their representatives, but these were not full Parliaments, for at the first, held at Northampton, no barons were present, while at the second, which sat at Acton-Burnell, the clergy had not been summoned. It was not till 1295 that Edward, then in the thick of his Scotch and French wars, summoned barons, clergy, knights of the shire, and citizens, all to meet him, "because that which touches all should be approved by all." But the complete form of Parliament was found to work so well that it was always summoned in that shape for the future.

Parliamentary representation.

We may now turn to Edward's political doings. The affairs of Wales require the first notice. We have already mentioned in earlier chapters how the southern districts of that country had long ago passed, partly by conquest, partly by intermarriage with the families of native chiefs, into the hands of various Anglo-Norman barons. These nobles of the Welsh Marchland, or *Lords Marchers* as they were called, had as their main duty the task of overawing and restraining the princes of North Wales, where Celtic anarchy still reigned supreme. Anglesea, the mountain lands of Snowdon, Merioneth, and the valley of the Dee were the last home of the native Welsh. In this land of Gwynedd native princes still ruled, and proved most unruly vassals to the English crown. Whenever England was vexed by civil war, the Welsh descended from their hills,

Condition of Wales.

attacked the Lords Marchers, and pushed their incursions into Cheshire and Shropshire. Sometimes they pushed even further afield; in 1257 they ravaged as far as Cardiff and Hereford. If it had not been that the princes of North Wales were even more given to murderous family feuds than to raids on the English border, they would have been an intolerable pest; but their interminable petty strife with each other generally kept them quiet.

In 1272, the ruler of North Wales was Llewellyn-ap-Gruffyd, a



WALES IN 1282.

bold and stirring prince, who had put down all his rebellious brothers and cousins, and united the whole of Gwynedd under his sword. Following the example of his ancestors, Llewellyn had plunged with alacrity into the English civil wars of the time of Henry III He had allied himself with Simon de Montfort, and under cover of this alliance had made cruel ravages on the lands of the Lords Marchers in South Wales. He held out long after Simon fell

Invasion of Wales.

at Evesham, and only made peace in 1267, when he was admitted to very favourable terms and confirmed in the full possession of his principality. When Edward ascended his father's throne, he bade Llewellyn come to his court and do him homage, such as the ancient princes of Wales had been accustomed to offer. But he was met with repeated refusals; six times he summoned the Welshman to appear, and six times he was denied, for Llewellyn said that he would not leave his hills unless he was given as hostages the king's brother, Edmund of Lancaster, and the Justiciar Ralph of Hengham. He feared for his life, he said, and would not trust himself in his suzerain's hands. Edward was not accustomed to have his word doubted, and, being conscious of his own honest intentions, was bitterly angered at his vassal's distrust and contumacious answers. But the king's wrath reached its highest pitch in 1275, when he found that Llewellyn had put himself in communication with France, and sent to the French court for Eleanor de Montfort, Earl Simon's daughter, to take her to wife. The ship that carried the bride was captured off the Scilly Isles by a Bristol privateer, and she with her brother, Amaury of Montfort, fell into Edward's hands. After Llewellyn had made one further refusal to do homage, Edward raised a great army and invaded Wales. The prince and his wild tribesmen took refuge in the fastnesses of Snowdon, but Edward blockaded all the outlets from the hills, and in a few months the Welsh were starved into submission. Llewellyn was forced to surrender himself into his suzerain's hands, but received better terms than might have been expected. He was made to do homage, and to give up the land between Conway and the Dee, the modern shire of Denbigh, but was allowed to retain the rest of his dominions, and received his bride from Edward's hands. He was also reconciled to his brothers, whom he had long before driven away from Wales, and David—the eldest of these exiles—was given a great barony cut out of the ceded lands on the Dee (1277).

Rebellion of Llewellyn and David of Wales.

Though he had felt the weight of Edward's hand, the Prince of Wales was unwise enough to provoke his suzerain the second time. Finding that there was much discontent in the ceded districts of Wales, because the king was systematically substituting English laws and customs for the old Celtic usages, Llewellyn resolved to make a

sudden attempt to free them and to throw off his allegiance. His brother David joined in the plot, though he had always been protected by Edward, and owed all that he possessed to English aid. On Palm Sunday, 1282, the two brothers secretly took arms without any declaration of war. David surprised Hawarden Castle, captured the chief justice of Wales, and slew the garrison, while Llewellyn swept the whole coast-land as far as the gates of Chester with fire and sword.

This treacherous and unprovoked rebellion deeply angered the king; he swore that he would make an end of the troublesome principality, and raised an army and a fleet greater than any that had ever been sent against the Welsh. After some slight engagements, the English once more drove Llewellyn and his host into the crags of Snowdon. Convinced of his folly, the prince sent to ask for peace; but Edward would not again grant the easy terms that he had given in 1277. Llewellyn should become an English earl, he said, and be granted lands worth £1000 a year; but the independent principality of North Wales had been tried and found wanting—it should be abolished and annexed to England.

Llewellyn, though in the sorest straits, refused these terms. By a dangerous night march he slipped through the English lines with a few chosen followers, and hastened into mid-Wales, to stir up rebellion in Brecknock. But near Builth he fell in with a small party of English, and was slain in the skirmish which followed by an esquire named Adam of Frankton, who knew not with whom he was fighting. David, his brother, now proclaimed himself Prince of Wales, and held out in Snowdon for some months longer. But he was ultimately betrayed to the king by his own starving followers. He was taken over the border to be tried before the English Parliament, which met at Acton Burnell, just outside the walls of Shrewsbury. There was far more dislike felt for him than for his brother. Llewellyn had always been an open enemy, but David had long served at the English court, and had been granted his barony by Edward's special favour. Hence it came that the Parliament passed the death-sentence for treason on the last Prince of Wales, and he was executed at Shrewsbury, with all the horrid details of hanging, drawing, and quartering, which were the traitor's lot in

Death of Llewellyn.—Execution of David.

those days. The harshness of his punishment almost makes us forget the provocation that he had given the king; mercy for traitors was not characteristic of Edward's temper (1283).

Edward stayed for nearly two years in Wales after the fighting had ended; he devoted himself to reorganizing the principality, on the English model. Llewellyn's dominions were cut up into the new counties of Anglesea, Merioneth, and Carnarvon. Strong castles were built at Conway, Beaumaris, Carnarvon, and Harlech, to hold them down, and colonies of English were tempted by liberal grants and charters to settle in the towns which grew up at points suitable for centres of commerce. For the future governance of the land Edward drew up the "Statute of Wales," issued at Rhuddlan in 1284; he allowed a certain amount of the old Celtic customary law to survive, but introduced English legal usages to a much larger extent. The Welsh murmured bitterly against the new customs, but found them in the end a great improvement. Edward endeavoured to solace their discontent by placing many of the administrative posts in Welsh hands, and their national pride by reviving the ancient name of the principality. For in 1301 he gave his heir Edward, who had been born at Carnarvon, the title of Prince of Wales, solemnly invested him with the rule of the principality at a great meeting of all the Welsh chiefs, and set him to govern the land. Later kings of England have followed the custom, and the title of Prince of Wales has become stereotyped as that of the heir to the English crown. It must not be supposed that Wales settled down easily and without friction beneath Edward's sceptre. There were three or four risings against his authority, headed by chiefs who thought that they had some claim to inherit the old principality. One of these insurrections was a really formidable affair; in 1294, Madoc, the son of Llewellyn, raised half North Wales to follow him, beat the Earl of Lincoln in open battle, and ravaged the English border. The king himself, though sorely vexed at the moment by wars in Gascony and Scotland, marched against him at mid-winter, but had to retire, foiled by the snows and torrents of the Welsh mountains. But next spring Madoc was pursued and captured, and sent to spend the rest of his life as a captive in the Tower of London (1295).

Settlement of Wales.

For a few years after the annexation of Wales, the annals of

England are comparatively uneventful. Some of Edward's legislation, with which we have already dealt, falls into this period, but the king's attention was mainly taken up with foreign politics, into which he was drawn by his position as Duke of Aquitaine. He spent some time in Guienne, succeeded by careful diplomacy in keeping out of the wars between France and Aragon, which were raging near him, and introduced a measure of good government among his Gascon subjects. But more important events nearer home were soon to attract his attention.

Foreign affairs.

In 1286 perished Alexander III., King of Scotland, cast over the cliffs of Kinghorn by the leap of an unruly horse. He was the last male of the old royal house that descended from Malcolm Canmore and the sainted Queen Margaret. Three children, two sons and a daughter, had been born to him, but they had all died young, and his only living descendant was his daughter's daughter, a child of four years. Her mother had wedded Eric, King of Norway, and it was at the Norwegian court that the little heiress was living when her grandfather died. Though Scotland had never before obeyed a queen-regnant, her nobles made no difficulty in accepting the child Margaret, the "maid of Norway" as they called her, for their sovereign. A regency was appointed in her name, and the whole nation accepted her sway.

Scotland.—Accession of Margaret of Norway.

Now Edward of England saw, in the accession of a young girl to the Scottish throne, a unique opportunity for bringing about a closer union of England and Scotland. There was no rational objection to the scheme: a century had elapsed since the two countries had been at war, their baronages had become united by constant intermarriage; the Lowlands—the more important half of the Scotch realm—were English in speech and manners. Most important of all, there were as yet few or no national grudges between the races on either bank of the Tweed. Of the rancorous hostility which was to divide them in the next century no man had any presage.

Scheme for uniting the two crowns.

When the little Queen of Scotland had reached her seventh year, the king proposed to the Scots' regents that she should be married to his own son and heir, Edward of Carnarvon. He pledged himself that the kingdoms should not be forcibly united;

Scotland should keep all its laws and liberties and be administered by Scots alone, without any interference from England. The regents did not mislike the scheme; they summoned the Parliament of the northern realm to meet at Brigham-on-Tweed, and there Edward's offers were accepted and ratified with the consent of the whole realm (July, 1290).

The next step was to send to Norway for the young queen, for she had been living at her father's court till now, and had never visited her own kingdom. She set sail for Scotland in the autumn of the year 1290, but adverse winds kept her vessel tossed for weeks in the wild North Sea. The strain was too much for the frail child; when at last she came ashore at Kirkwall in the Orkneys, it was only to die. With her life ended the fairest opportunity of uniting the two realms on equal terms that had ever been known.

Death of Margaret.

Edward's scheme had fallen through, and his grief was great; but much greater was the dismay in Scotland, where the regents found themselves face to face with the calamity of the extinction of the whole royal house. There was no longer any king or queen in whose name the law of the realm could run, or the simplest duties of government be discharged. Gradually claimants for the crown began to step forward, basing their demands on ancient alliances with the old kingly line, but the nearest of these connections went back more than a hundred years, to female descendants of King David, who had died in 1153. In this strait the Scots determined to appeal to King Edward as arbitrator between the pretenders, whose rivalry seemed likely to split the kingdom up into a group of disorderly feudal principalities. Edward readily consented, seeing that in the capacity of arbitrator he could find an opportunity of making more real the old English right of suzerainty over the kingdom of Scotland. It will be remembered that as far back as the tenth century, the kings of the Scots had done homage to Edward the elder, and that they held the more important half of their realm, Lothian and Strathclyde, which together form the Lowlands, as grants under feudal obligations from the English crown. But the exact degree of dependence of Scotland on England had never been accurately fixed, though Scottish kings had often sat in English Parliaments, and sometimes served in the English armies. It might be pleaded by a

Extinction of the royal line. —Rival claimants.

patriotic Scot that, as Earl of Lothian, his king had certain obligations to the English sovereign, but that for his lands north of the Forth and Clyde he was liable to no such duties. This depended on the nature of the discharge given by Richard I. to William the Lion in 1190, when he sold the Scottish king a release of certain duties of homage in return for the sum of 10,000 marks. But the agreement of Richard and William had been drawn up in such an unbusiness-like manner that no one could say exactly what it covered.

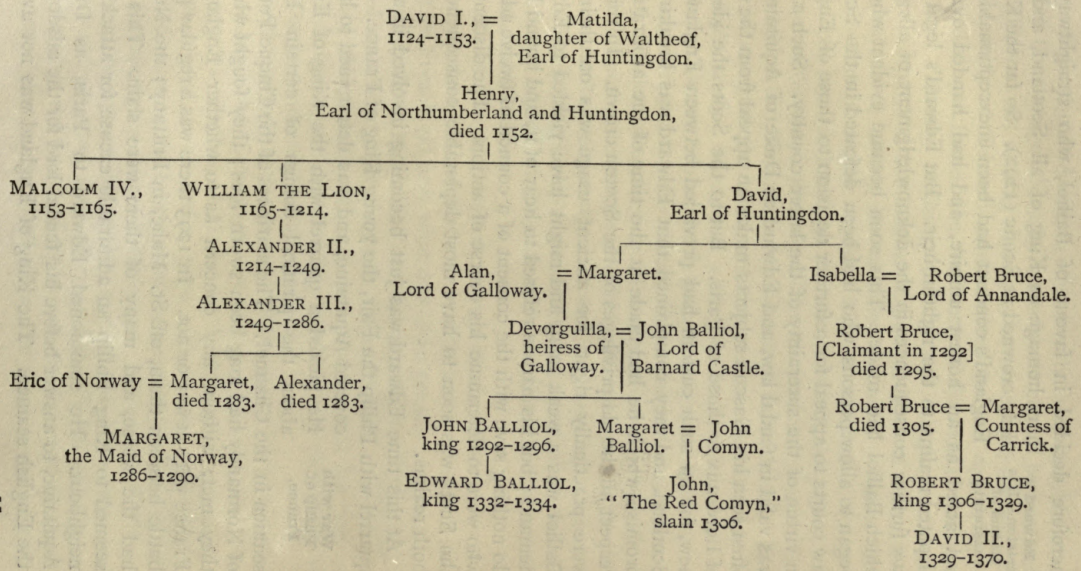
King Edward was determined to put an end to this uncertainty, and, as a preliminary to accepting the post of arbitrator in the Scottish succession dispute, required that the regents and all the nobles of the northern realm should acknowledge his complete suzerainty over the whole kingdom. After some hesitation they consented. Edward made a tour through Edinburgh, Stirling, and St. Andrews, and there received the homage of the whole nobility of Scotland. He then appointed a court of arbitration to sit at Berwick, and adjudicate on the rights of the thirteen claimants to the crown; it consisted of eighty Scots and twenty-four Englishmen.

Edward's arbitration.—Balliol and Bruce.

The court found that of serious claims to the crown there were only two—those of John Balliol and Robert Bruce, each of whom descended in the female line from the old King David I., who had died in 1153. The positions of Balliol and Bruce were closely similar: they were descended from two Anglo-Norman barons of the north country, who had married two sisters, Margaret and Isabella, the great-granddaughters of David I. Both of them were as much English as Scotch in blood and breeding. Balliol was Lord of Barnard Castle, in Durham; Bruce had been Sheriff of Cumberland, and had long served King Edward as chief justice of the King's Bench. Like so many of the Scottish barons, they were equally at home on either side of the border. The point of difficulty to decide between them was that, while Balliol descended from the elder of the two co-heiresses, Bruce was a generation nearer to the parent stem, and claimed to have a preference on this account by Scottish usage.

The court of arbitration decided that this plea of Bruce's was unsound, and that his rival's right was undoubted. Edward

THE SCOTTISH SUCCESSION IN 1292.



therefore decided in favour of Balliol, who straightway did him homage as King of all Scotland, and was duly crowned at Scone (1292). So far the King of England's conduct had been unexceptionable; he had acted as an honest umpire, and had handed over the disputed realms to the rightful heir. But Edward's legal mind saw further consequences in the acknowledgment of allegiance which Balliol had made. This soon became evident when he began to allow persons who had been defeated in the Scottish law courts to appeal for a further decision to those of England, in virtue of the suzerainty of the latter country. Such a claim was valid in feudal law, and Edward as Duke of Aquitaine had often seen his Gascon subjects make an appeal from the courts of Bordeaux to those of Paris. But to the Scots the idea was new, for no such custom had prevailed between England and Scotland, and they complained that Edward was breaking the promise which he had made at the time of the arbitration, to respect all the old privileges of the Scotch crown. In this they were practically right, for ancient usage was on their side. Balliol was a weak man, and might have yielded to Edward's demand; but his barons refused to hear of it, and bound him to do nothing save with the consent of a council of twelve advisers, who were to determine his course of action. The discontent of the Scots was soon to have most deplorable consequences for both realms.

Edward's decision.—His claims of suzerainty.

At this time Edward was just becoming involved in a bitter quarrel with Philip the Fair, the young King of France. Philip coveted Aquitaine, and was determined to have it. He picked a quarrel with the King of England about the piratical doings of certain English seamen in the Channel. The mariners of the Cinque Ports and of Normandy had long been sworn foes; they fought whenever they met, without any concern as to whether England and France were at war or not. In 1293 there was a regular pitched battle between them, off St. Mahé, in Brittany; the Normans had the worse, and many of them were slain. This affray seemed to King Philip an admirable excuse for attacking his neighbour. He summoned Edward to Paris, as Duke of Aquitaine, to answer before his feudal lord for the misdoings of the English seamen. The King of England was not averse to

War with Philip of France.

giving satisfaction, and sent to offer to submit to an arbitration, in which the damages done by his subjects should be assessed. But Philip was not seeking damages, but an excuse for war ; he at once declared Edward contumacious for not appearing in person, and proclaimed the forfeiture of the whole duchy of Aquitaine. Hardly realizing the French king's intentions, Edward despatched his brother Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, to endeavour to satisfy his offended suzerain. Philip then declared that he would consider himself satisfied if Edward surrendered into his hand, as a token of submission, the chief fortresses of Gascony : they should be restored the moment that compensation had been made for the doings at St. Mahé. Earl Edmund accepted the offer, and the castles were duly placed in Philip's hands. Then, with a barefaced effrontery that disgusted even his own nobles, the French king repudiated the agreement, and declared that he should retain Guienne permanently. Edward was thus committed to an unexpected war, while all his strongholds in Aquitaine were already in the enemy's hands. He began to arm in great wrath, and sent ambassadors abroad to gather allies among Philip's continental foes, chief of whom were the Emperor Adolf of Nassau and the Counts of Brabant, Holland, and Flanders.

But Philip also had looked about him for allies. At this moment Madoc-ap-Llewellyn rose in rebellion in North Wales, relying on French aid, and, what was of far greater importance, the discontent of the Scots took the form of open war with England. John Balliol embraced the French alliance, promised to wed his son to Philip's daughter, and sent raiding bands across the border to harry Cumberland and Northumberland.

Alliance of Philip with the Welsh and Scots.

Edward resolved at once to ward off the nearer dangers before taking in hand the reconquest of Guienne. How he put down the dangerous rebellion of Madoc the Welshman, we have related in an earlier page. That campaign had taken up the best part of the year 1295 ; in the next spring the turn of Balliol came. He was summoned to appear before his suzerain at Newcastle, and when he did not obey, Edward crossed the Tweed with a great host. Berwick, the frontier fortress and chief port of Scotland, was stormed after a very short siege, and three weeks later the

Edward invades Scotland.—Balliol gives up his crown.

Scottish king was completely routed at the battle of Dunbar (April 27, 1296). So unskilfully did the Scots fight, that they were beaten by Edward's vanguard under John de Warenne—the hero of the rusty sword at the *Quo Warranto* inquest—before the king and the main body of the English army came upon the field. One after another, Edinburgh, Perth, Stirling, and all the chief towns of Scotland yielded themselves, and ere long the craven-spirited king of the north surrendered himself, and gave up his crown into Edward's hands, asking pardon as one who had been misled and coerced by evil counsellors.

Edward then held a Parliament of all the Scottish barons, and received their homage, being resolved to reign himself as king north as well as south of the Tweed. He told the assembled nobles that none of the old laws of Scotland should be changed, and issued an amnesty to Balliol's late partisans. It seemed that all resistance was at an end, and that the union of the crowns was to take place with no further trouble or bloodshed. John de Warenne—the victor of Dunbar—was appointed guardian of the realm, and Edward turned southward in triumph, taking with him the Scottish regalia, and the Holy Stone of Scone, on which the Kings of Scotland were wont to be crowned. That famous relic still remains at Westminster, where Edward placed it, and serves as the pedestal of the coronation chair of the Kings of England to this day.

The king thought that Scotland was tamed even as Wales had been, forgetting that the Scots had hardly tried their strength against him, and had yielded so easily mainly because their craven king had deserted them. Dismissing northern affairs from his mind, he now turned to the long-deferred expedition to Guienne. The greater part of that duchy was still in King Philip's greedy hands, and only Bayonne and a few other towns were holding out against him. Edward determined to land in Flanders himself, and there to stir up his German allies against France, but to send the great bulk of the English levies to Gascony, under the Marshal, Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk.

The expedition to Guienne.

But the expedition was not to take place without much preliminary trouble and difficulty. Edward was in grave need of money to furnish forth his great army, and tried to levy new taxes without any formal grants from Parliament. This at

once brought him into conflict with the clergy and the baronage. The arrogant Pope Boniface VIII. had just published a bull named *Clericis Laicos*, from its opening words. It forbade the clergy to pay any taxes to the crown from their ecclesiastical revenues. Archbishop Winchelsey thought himself bound to carry out the Pope's command, and refused, in the name of all his order, to assent to any portion of the national taxation falling on Church land. The king, who was in no mood to stand objections, was moved to great wrath at this unreasonable claim. He copied the behaviour of his grandfather, King John, in a similar crisis, and by his behest the judges proclaimed that no cleric should have law in the king's courts till the refusal to pay taxes was rescinded. Edward himself sequestrated the lands of the see of Canterbury, and intimated to all tenants on the estates of the clergy that nothing should be done against them if they refused to pay their rents. Many ecclesiastics thereupon withdrew their refusal to contribute to the national expenses; but the archbishop held out, and the quarrel ran on for some time. At last Boniface VIII. was induced to so far modify his bull as to admit that the Church might make voluntary grants for the purpose of national defence. Winchelsey therefore promised the king that he would endeavour to induce the clergy to make large contributions of their own free will, if Edward on his side would confirm the Great Charter, and swear to take no further measures against Church property. To this offer Edward could not refuse his consent; he was in urgent need of money, and, although it was a bad precedent to allow the clergy to assess their own taxation outside Parliament, and on a different scale from the contributions of the rest of the realm, he accepted Winchelsey's compromise.

Illegal taxation.—Conflict with the Church.

But this struggle of the king and the Church was but one important episode of a contention between the king and the whole nation, which filled the years 1296-7. Edward had provoked the barons and the merchants of England no less than the clergy—the former by bidding them sail for Gascony in the winter, and pay him a heavy tax; the latter by seizing all their wool—England's greatest export—as it lay in harbour, and forcing them to pay a heavy fine, the *mal-tolt*, or evil tax, as

Conflict with Parliament.—Confirmatio Cartarum.

it was called, before he would let it be sent over-sea. All this had been done without the consent of Parliament. The barons, headed by Roger Bigod, who had been told off to head the expedition to Guienne, refused to go abroad unless the king himself should lead them, urging that their feudal duty was only to defend the kingdom, and not to wage wars beyond it. Bigod flatly refused to set out unless the king went with him. "By God, Sir Earl, thou shalt either go or hang!" exclaimed Edward, irritated at the contumacy of one who, as Marshal of England, was bound to hold the most responsible post in the army that he was striving to raise. "And by God, Sir King, I will neither go nor hang!" shouted the equally enraged Earl Marshal He flung himself out of the king's presence, and with the aid of his friend Bohun, the Earl of Hereford, gathered a great host, and prepared to withstand the king, if he should persist in endeavouring to carry out his design. Edward, however, sailed himself for the continent without forcing the barons to follow him. When he was gone, a Parliament met. Archbishop Winchelsey and the Earls of Norfolk and Hereford took the lead in protesting against the king's late arbitrary action, and by their council a recapitulation of the Great Charter was drawn up, with certain articles added at the end which expressly stipulated that the king should never raise any tax or impost without the consent of lords and commons in Parliament assembled — so that such an exaction as the late *mal-tolt* would be in future illegal. The document, which is generally known as the *Confirmatio Cartarum*, was sent over-sea to the king. He received it at Ghent, and after much doubting signed it, for he always wished to have the goodwill of the nation, and knew that a persistence in the exercise of his royal prerogative would bring on a rebellion such as that which had overturned his father in 1263. From this moment dates the first practical control of the Parliament over the royal revenue, for the clause in Magna Carta which stipulates for such a right had been so often violated both by Henry III. and his son, that it required to be fully vindicated by the *Confirmatio Cartarum* before it was recognized as binding both by king and people.

Meanwhile Edward got little aid in Flanders from his German allies, and found that he had small chance of punishing King

Philip by their arms. He saw Bruges and Lille taken by the French, and finally returned foiled to England, called thither by evil news from the north.

Scotland was once more up in arms. Though the Anglo-Norman lords who formed the bulk of the baronage had readily done homage to the English monarch, the mass of the nation were far less satisfied with the new condition of affairs. They felt that their king and nobles had betrayed them to the foreigner—for to many of them, notably the Highlanders, the Galloway men, and the Welsh of Strathclyde, the Englishman still seemed foreign. Edward had not made a very wise choice in the ministers whom he left behind in Scotland; Ormesby, the chief justice, and Cressingham, the treasurer, both made themselves hated by their harsh and unbending persistence in endeavouring to introduce English laws and English taxes. In the autumn of 1297 an insurrection broke out in the West Lowlands, headed by a Strathclyde squire, named William Wallace (or le Walleys, *i.e.* the Welshman). He had been wronged by the Sheriff of Lanark, took to the hills, and was outlawed. His small band of followers soon swelled to a multitude, and the regent, John de Warenne, was obliged to march against him in person. Despising the tumultuary array of the rebels, who had been joined by none of the barons and few of the gentry, the earl marched carelessly out of Stirling to attack Wallace, who lay on the hill across the river, beyond Cambuskenneth bridge. Instead of waiting to be attacked, Wallace charged when a third of the English host had crossed the stream. This vanguard was overwhelmed and driven into the Forth, while de Warenne could not bring up his reserves across the crowded bridge. He withdrew into Stirling, leaving several thousand dead on the field, among them the hated treasurer Cressingham, out of whose skin the victorious Scots are said to have cut straps and belts.

Rising of the Scots.—William Wallace.

This unexpected victory caused a general rising: some of the barons and many of the gentry joined the insurgents. Wallace and the Earl of Moray, Seneschal of Scotland, were proclaimed wardens of the realm in behalf of the absent John Balliol, and their authority was generally acknowledged. Warenne could do nothing against them, and prayed his master

to come over-sea to his help. Meanwhile, Wallace crossed the Tweed at the head of a great band of marauders, and harried Northumberland with a wanton cruelty which was to lead to bitter reprisals later on.

It was not till 1298 that Edward returned to England, and took in hand the suppression of the rebellion. He crossed the border with the whole feudal levy of England, twenty thousand bowmen, and a great horde of Welsh light infantry; soon he was joined by many Scots of the English faction. Wallace burnt the Lothians behind him, and retired northward for some time without fighting. Edward's great host was almost forced to retire for want of provisions, but when the news was brought him that Wallace had pitched his camp at Falkirk, he pressed on to bring the Scots to action. He found them drawn up behind a morass, formed in four great clumps of pikemen, with archers in the intervals, and a few cavalry in the reserve. The first charge of the English horse was checked by the bog; the second was beaten back by the steady infantry of the Scots. Then Edward brought forward his archers, and bade them riddle the heavy masses of the enemy with ceaseless arrow-flights, till a gap was made. Then the English horse charged again; the Scottish knights in reserve fled without attempting to save the day, and the greater part of the squares of pikemen were ridden down and cut to pieces. Wallace fled to the hills, and the English cruelly ravaged all the Lowlands. But the Scots did not yet submit; the barons deposed Wallace, of whom they had always been jealous, and named a regency to supersede him, under John Comyn, the nephew of their exiled king. The struggle lingered on for several years more, for Edward was hindered from completing his work by the continual pressure of the French war. It was not till 1301–2 that he resumed and finished the conquest of the Lowlands. But in 1303 he was at length able to make a definitive peace with Philip IV., who restored to him all the lost fortresses of Guienne. Free at last from his continental troubles, Edward swept over Scotland from end to end, carrying his arms into the north as far as Elgin and Banff. The regent Comyn and all the barons of the land submitted to him, and by the capture of Stirling in 1304 the last embers of resistance were quenched.

Edward in Scotland.—Battle of Falkirk.

Scotland was apparently crushed: the king reorganized the whole country, cutting it up into counties and sheriffdoms like England, providing for its representation in the English Parliament, and setting up new judges and governors throughout the land. The administration was, for the most part, left in the hands of Scots, though the king's nephew, John of Brittany, was appointed regent and warden of the land. The last hope of the survival of Scottish independence seemed to vanish in 1305, when Wallace, who had maintained himself as an outlaw in the hills long after the rest of his countrymen had submitted, fell into the hands of the English. He was betrayed by some of his own men to Sir John Menteith, one of Edward's Scottish officials. Menteith sent him to London, where he was executed as a traitor, with all the cruelties that were prescribed for men guilty of high treason. It would have been better for the king's good name if he—like so many other Scots — had been pardoned; but Edward could not forgive the prime mover of the insurrection, and the cruel waster of the English border.

Subjection of Scotland.—Wallace executed.

For some two years Scotland was governed as part of Edward's realm, but the nation submitted from sheer necessity, not from any good will. In 1306 the troubles broke out again, owing to the ambition of a single man. Robert Bruce, the grandson of the Bruce who had striven with Balliol in 1292, was the leader in the new rising. Like his grandfather, he was more of an English baron than a pure Scot. He had taken Edward's side in the civil wars, and seems to have hoped that his fidelity might be rewarded by the gift of the Scottish crown when the Balliols were finally dismissed. Receiving no such guerdon, he conspired with some of his kinsfolk and a few of the Scottish earls, and endeavoured to get John Comyn, the late regent of Scotland, to join him. But when Comyn refused—at an interview in the Greyfriars Kirk at Dumfries—to break his newly sworn faith to King Edward, Bruce slew him with his own hand before the altar, and fled to the north. There was method in this murder, for, after the Balliols, Comyn had the best hereditary claim to the Scottish throne.*

Robert Bruce.—Murder of John Comyn.

Gathering his followers at Scone, Bruce had himself crowned

* See table on p. 161.

King of Scotland. But his royalty was of the most ephemeral nature; few of the Scots would join one whose past record was so unsatisfactory, and his army was beaten and dispersed by de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, whom King Edward sent against him. Bruce had to take to the hills almost alone, and for many months was chased about the woods and lochs of Perthshire and Argyleshire by Highland chiefs eager to earn the price that Edward had set upon his head. His kinsmen, Nigel, Alexander, and Thomas, with most of his chief followers, were captured, tried and executed, for Edward was driven to wild anger by the unprovoked rising of one who had hitherto been his hot partisan. Even the ladies of Bruce's house were cast into dungeons, and the Countess of Buchan, who had crowned him at Scone, was shut up in an iron cage. The king's hand fell far more heavily on Scotland than before: the lands of Bruce's partisans were confiscated and given to Englishmen, and all who had favoured him were slain or outlawed.

Severity of Edward.

Unhappily for the king, these harsh measures had a very different result from that which he had expected. The hangings and confiscations gave Bruce many new partisans, and his misfortunes made him the nation's favourite. When he left his island refuge in Argyleshire in the spring of 1307 and landed in Carrick, he was joined by a considerable force. Edward, though now an old man, and stricken down by disease, swore that he would make an end of the traitor. He mounted his horse for the last time at Carlisle, and rode as far as Burgh-on-Sands, where bodily weakness forced him to stop. Feeling the hand of death upon him, he made his son Edward of Carnarvon swear to persevere in the expedition against Bruce. He even bade him bear his coffin forward into Scotland, for his very bones, he said, would make the Scots quake. Four days of illness ended his laborious life (July 17, 1307). His unworthy son at once broke up the army, leaving Bruce to make head unopposed, and used his father's funeral as an excuse for returning home. Edward was buried under a plain marble slab at Westminster, with the short inscription—

Death of Edward.

"EDWARDVS PRIMVS MALLEVS SCOTORVM HIC EST.
PACTVM SERVA."

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A history of England

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